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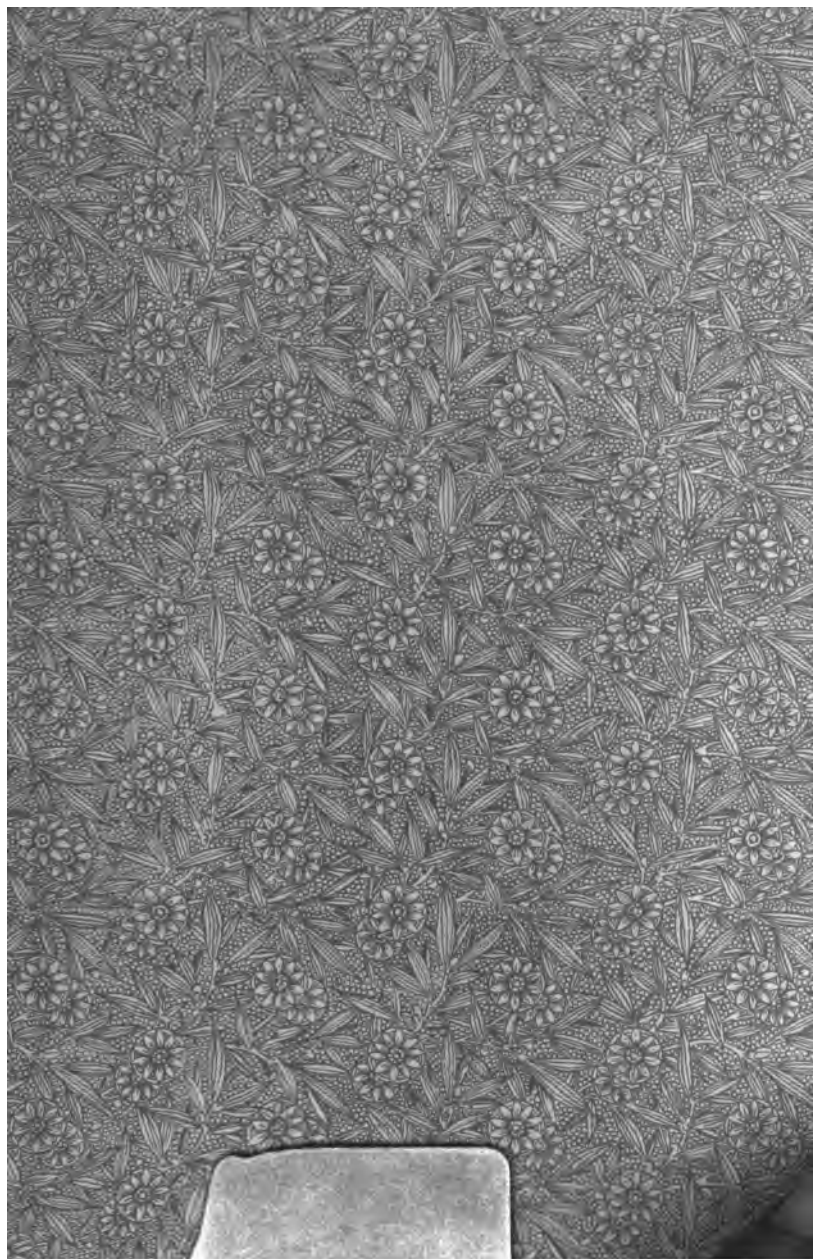
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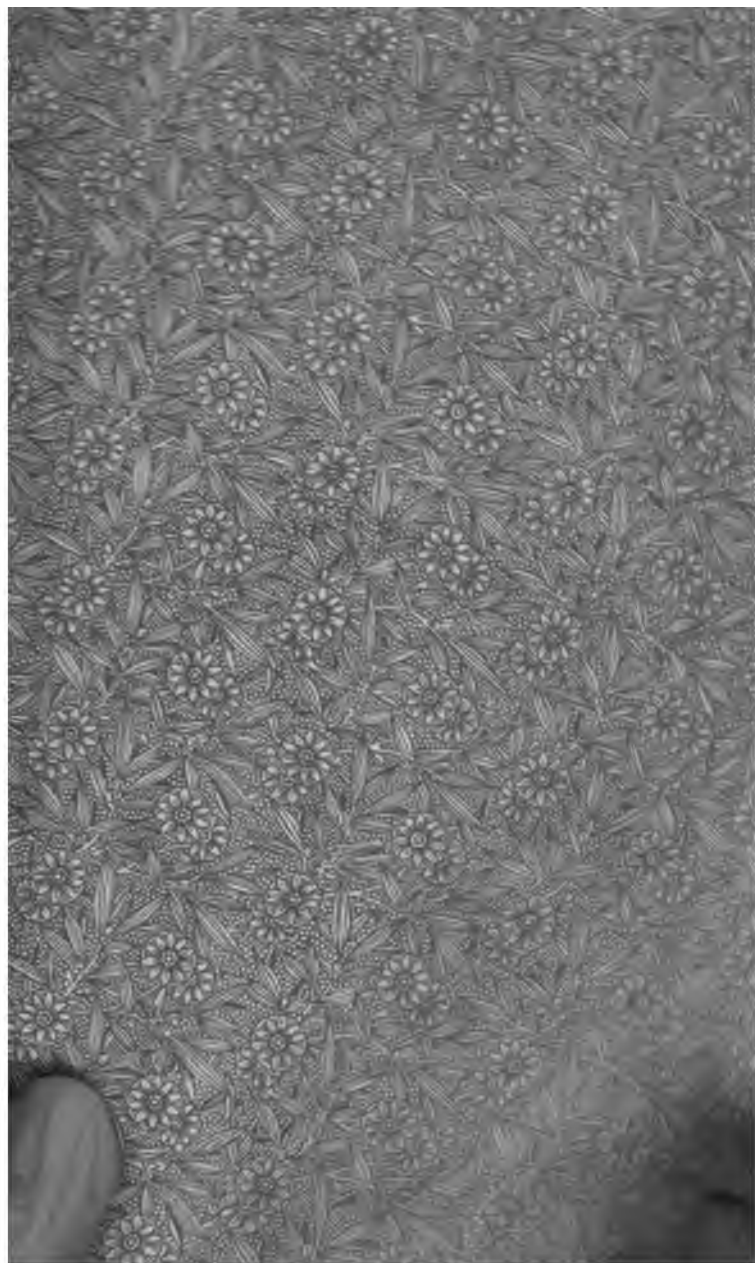
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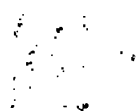
MRS GARNETT USED TO WATCH THESE FLOWERS FROM HER CHAMBER WINDOW

# CHAPTER 1

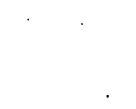
## THEORY OF THE EARTH

### 1.1. THE EARTH AND ITS HISTORY

#### 1.1.1. THE EARTH AND ITS HISTORY



#### 1.1.2. THE EARTH AND ITS HISTORY





# MICHAELMAS DAISY

## A Young Girl's Story

BY

SARAH DOUDNEY

AUTHOR OF "STRANGERS YET," ETC.



GRIFFITH & FARRAN

(SUCCESSORS TO NEWBERY AND HARRIS)

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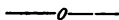
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# MICHAELMAS DAISY.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE GROWTH OF THE DAISY.

MRS ANDREW GARNETT was born in the country. From her babyhood she had been surrounded by woods and green fields, and her first playthings were buttercups and daisies. At nineteen she had left her home at the old farm to become the wife of a doctor, living in a street in a crowded town.


It was a close unwholesome street, and the house was small, and inconvenient to the last degree. Its back windows overlooked a wretched little piece of ground which had been part of a garden in bygone days ; but the smoke of factory chimneys had blighted the growth of green things, and most of the plants had perished long ago. In one corner,



however, there was a clump of Michaelmas daisies that persisted in flourishing and blooming in their season. When the year was on the wane, and the first autumn mists made the smoky atmosphere dimmer than ever, the daisies opened their modest flowers. There they were, with golden eyes and blue-grey petals; a spot of soft colour amid the unloveliness around them.

Just before the birth of her baby, Mrs Garnett used to sit and watch these flowers from her chamber window. She liked her bedroom better than the stuffy little drawing-room, where she could hear the street noises far too plainly. Close to the window her arm-chair was placed; and there she sat with certain fairy-like little garments in her lap, stitching away busily with thin fingers, and pausing sometimes to rest and gladden her eyes with the sight of the beloved daisies.

No one ever knew what doubts and troubles were silently confided to those autumn flowers. They were a tangible link between herself and God. It was as if He had given her a



bit of the old home to comfort her heart in its perplexity and loneliness ;—for poor Rose Garnett was very lonely in these days.

There is no need here to enter into the trials and disappointments of her married life, and it is sufficient to say that her crosses were of a very common kind. Dr Andrew Garnett was not a prosperous man ; his patients were only to be found among the poor, and he got more thanks than fees for his services. To do him justice, he was generous and kindly-natured, never grudging time and pains, and always willing to help the distressed. But the home had to be kept up ; the young wife was sickly, and pined for fresh air ; and there was no prospect of a bright future for the expected baby.

When Rose Woodburn had left the farm to become Andrew's wife, she had looked forward to a life of intense happiness. And there was no friend at hand to whisper of disenchantment, or to give the timely warning that a young exacting heart too often needs. Rose had lost her mother when she was just

seventeen; and Cecily, her sister, was two years younger than herself.

The people who knew Mrs Woodburn had said that she was a remarkable woman ; and they had said, too, that Cecily was far more like her than Rose could ever be.

Rose was a dreamer, and looked at all the stern facts of life through the haze of her own fancy. Cecily, too, had her dreams ; but, young as she was, she never suffered them to come between her sight and the working-day world. It was not without certain misgivings that she saw her sister depart, for Andrew Garnett was no hero in the eyes of Cecily.

She had noticed that he did not care to go with them to the old village church ; when he came to the farm to spend a Sunday, he made excuses to escape morning service, and would stroll out to meet the girls on their way home. Mr Woodburn was a silent man, and if there was anything that he did not like in his intended son-in-law he kept his thoughts to himself. Cecily could never

ascertain her father's real opinion of Dr Andrew Garnett.

Very soon after Rose's marriage Mr Woodburn died, and the old house passed into other hands. Cecily found a situation in a school in Rose's neighbourhood, and the sisters saw each other every day. So that when Mrs Garnett's little daughter was born, Aunt Cecily took the baby in her arms, and vowed in her heart to be a second mother to Daisy.

"Why do you wish the child to be called Daisy?" said Dr Garnett to his wife. "Why not give her your own name, Rose?"

"She will never be a Rose, I think," the young mother answered. "Such a wee fragile thing, Andrew! Let her be Daisy—Michaelmas Daisy, born on Michaelmas Day."

"You sentimental women are always fond of observing Saints' days," said the doctor with a slight sneer. "I heard Cecily talking to the nurse about St Michael and all angels. Well, you may call the little one anything


that you like, Rose ; only get well and strong as fast as you can."

But Rose never got well and strong again.

Dr Garnett was never heard to speak a harsh word to his young wife. She was delicate; the baby was always ailing; the whole state of things was depressing, and he shrugged his shoulders and accepted his condition. And yet, although he said nothing unkind, the very servants knew that he felt his marriage to be a mistake, and regretted it from the bottom of his heart.

The fates were against him, he would say, with a cynical disbelief in anything higher than fate. And somehow his cool, hard way of bearing crosses pained Rose more than any rebellious outbreak. She knew that he shouldered his burdens with the determination to carry them alone. He did not believe in such a thing as spiritual aid, nor, indeed, in anything spiritual at all.

Two years after the birth of her Michaelmas Daisy, Rose said a long farewell to



husband and child, and Andrew Garnett was left a widower.

The young doctor had loved his wife, not very warmly, perhaps, but still well enough to grieve for her in all sincerity. He, too, had had his share of disappointment in married life.

He had believed when he gathered his Rose that it would keep its bloom for many a year ; but it was too fragile a flower to retain its freshness long. Rose Garnett was an over-sensitive woman, easily worried, soon depressed ; and such women always grow prematurely faded. Her chief claims to beauty lay in the perfect pink and white of her complexion, and the luxuriant golden hair which had been the envy of all her girlish friends. Who does not know how perishable such beauty is, even when its possessor is blessed with a calm temperament ? But Rose's nature was not calm, and her restless heart quickly made an end of her good looks.

A year after her wedding-day she looked

like the ghost of the bright girl who had stood before the altar of the village church ; and it was not unnatural perhaps that Dr Garnett should have been bitterly vexed at the change.

When the funeral was over, life went on very quietly in the doctor's small house in Holly Street. Cecily Woodburn still kept her situation in the school, although people said she was clever enough to have filled a far higher post. But there were two strong ties that held Cecily fast bound to the crowded old town of Bridleton.

In the first place she was engaged to be married to a curate who was one of the hardest workers in that busy town. It was in vain that Dr Garnett, and even Rose, had spoken of the poor prospects of the young clergyman ; Cecily had made up her mind to cling to Edgar Wyon for better or for worse, and she was not a girl who could be easily turned from her purpose. Edgar was good and true ; she loved him, and if they could not afford to marry for years, what of that ?

It was in this determined fashion that she answered all objections ; and as no one could deny Mr Wyon's worthiness, the affair was allowed to take its own course, and went on more comfortably than such affairs usually do.

The second tie to Bridleton was Michaelmas Daisy.

Cecily loved the child with an intense devotion that even touched the heart of Dr Garnett, cool and cynical as he was. Moreover, he had a secret respect for the force of Cecily's character, and the strength of her intellect ; and he was not unwilling that she should take the care of Daisy's training upon herself.

"Cecily's religion is made of stronger stuff than Rose's ever was," he said to himself one day. "My poor Rose was a very feeble little Christian, who could only shed tears if I sneered at her faith. But Cecily carries a sword, sharp and bright, and when her creed is attacked, she can use her weapon dexterously enough. However, she is too wise to



draw her blade from its sheath when it isn't wanted,—a trick that too many clever women have,—and on the whole we go on peaceably."

So Cecily came in the evenings to the house in Holly Street, and devoted herself to her little niece. She did not see much of Dr Garnett; he spent most of his leisure time away from home. But when they did chance to meet, they were good friends.

And months and years passed away without bringing any changes worthy of note to Daisy. The room in which she had first seen the light had been converted into a nursery, where the child played her solitary games, and talked to her dolls and pictures. The Michaelmas daisies bloomed autumn after autumn, and Daisy looked out upon them from her window with loving eyes.

"Dear flowers," she used to say, "God must have made them grow on purpose to please Daisy."



## CHAPTER II.

"A STORM WAS COMING, BUT THE WINDS  
WERE STILL."

"CECILY," said Dr Garnett, thoughtfully, "I have been wondering whether my brother Philip would like to see my Daisy?" He spoke in a gentler tone than usual. It was a Saturday afternoon, and Daisy and Aunt Cecily, both released from school and its duties, had been taking a stroll together. The doctor had overtaken them just as they reached his door, and all three had entered the house. Tea was ready on the table; the fire burned briskly, and altogether the small sitting-room looked pleasant and home-like. Daisy's hands had been at work all over the house, and had left their traces everywhere.

The October day was on the wane, but there was light enough for Cecily to see the softened look on the doctor's face. Daisy

had left the room, and her father's eyes had followed her with a new and wistful expression.

"She is just sixteen," he went on. "It seems impossible to believe that she is a woman, Cecily. Some people think her pretty, do they not?"

"She is very pretty," Cecily replied.

"Yes; I suppose she is. And she's a good girl, I know; you have trained her well, Cecily. She will miss you sadly if you leave Bridleton; it will be a terrible loss for her, poor child."

"I don't mean to leave Bridleton, Andrew," said Cecily, quietly. "My niece is the dearest thing left to me on earth, and I cannot part with her."

"But Lady Jessie Boyd has made you a capital offer; you ought to think of your own interests. Don't refuse her without due consideration, Cecily."

"I would be very happy with Lady Jessie if there were no Daisy," she answered, frankly. "The offer is a good one; but I cannot leave my pet."

"Think of all that you are giving up for Daisy! A liberal salary, and an entrance into the very best society. Do you realize it thoroughly?"

"Yes, Andrew, I do."

The doctor was looking earnestly at his sister-in-law while she spoke. Cecily Woodburn was two-and-thirty now, and was far handsomer in her maturity than she had ever been in her girlhood.

Andrew Garnett recalled the tall lanky girl who had stood beside his Rose as bridesmaid, and wondered at the change that time had made.

Cecily was a Juno-like woman in these days. Her plain serge gown was worn like a royal robe, and she moved with such a natural grace and majesty that strangers never failed to notice her, and to ask whom she was? There are women who always make their mark wherever they go; and once seen, Cecily was rarely forgotten.

She had a clear brown complexion, and dark hair which was always simply braided

at the back of her head. Her features had once seemed too boldly chiselled for her thin girlish face ; but now that the cheeks had filled out, and the figure was fully developed, they were perfect in their Roman type of beauty. The eyes were large and deeply blue, shaded by lashes that were black as night ; and black, too, were the delicate, straight eyebrows. There was an openness and fearlessness in Cecily's look that made one trust her at once. "That is a brave woman," people said ; and yet one felt instinctively that she was as gentle and feminine as the very weakest of her sex.

As the doctor met the frank gaze of those large blue eyes, he was struck by Cecily's beauty and grace. It seemed a pity indeed that such a grand creature should be merely a teacher in a school in Bridleton ; and he spoke his thoughts aloud.

"You are wasted here," he said. "If you went out into the world you might make a splendid match, Cecily ;—yes, I believe you would."

She shook her head.

"Since Edgar Wyon died, seven years ago, I have not thought of marrying," she replied. "I have had chances, but my heart has always said nay. Yet I don't think I am wasted, Andrew; I have a work to do in Bridleton, and here I shall stay till I am called to depart."

"What do you mean by being called to depart?" he asked. "You surely are not thinking of dying? That's the way that religious people talk when they believe themselves near their end. But you are not near your end, Cecily!"

"But, Andrew, one may be near the end of a chapter, and yet far from the end of the book. I have had such a very long chapter here in Bridleton, that I sometimes feel that I am about to begin another. Lately I have had a haunting notion that I am to be called away from Daisy, or Daisy from me."

"And yet when Lady Jessie Boyd calls, you refuse to follow?"

"It is not an imperative call. But you

were speaking of your brother, Andrew, and wondering whether he would like to see Daisy."

Dr Garnett drew a long breath, and sat down wearily in a chair by the fire.

"My brother is a great man," he said, after a pause. "If—if Daisy were to be left fatherless, he would take care of her, I believe. He has two daughters of his own, but—"

The door opened, and Daisy herself came in with a light step and a bright face.

"See," she said, holding up an autumn nosegay; "old nurse has been here, and left these flowers for me!"

She stopped suddenly, arrested by the look in her father's eyes.

"Are you not well, papa?"

The words came out timidly, and in a low voice, for Dr Garnett was not on confidential terms with his child.

"We doctors have no time to be ill, Daisy," he answered.

He smiled kindly on her as he spoke; and at the same moment the hall-door bell was

pulled violently. With another sigh he got up from his seat, prepared to obey a sudden call; and Cecily, watching him narrowly, saw him close his eyes for an instant, and pass his hand across his forehead.

The servant entered with tidings of an accident. A breathless messenger was waiting impatiently in the hall; Dr Garnett buttoned his coat in haste, and gave a parting glance at his young daughter.

When he was gone, the aunt and niece sat down to the tea-table in silence. For some seconds Daisy left her cup untouched, and gazed absently out of the window at the passers by. The brightness had died out of her face, leaving it pale and grave; she looked at that moment so like her mother, that Cecily's heart began to ache with remembrance, and yet it was only a fleeting likeness. At ordinary times the girl bore but little resemblance to poor Rose.

Unlike Mrs Garnett, Daisy had regular features, and a pale but pure complexion. The wild-rose flush which had been the



mother's chief charm, rarely tinged the daughter's cheek. Her eyes, like her aunt's, were large and blue ; but they were of a lighter tint than Cecily's, and her lashes and eyebrows were only a shade darker than her golden brown hair. Cecily Woodburn had spoken truly when she had said that Daisy was very pretty ; yet so delicate and refined a beauty was seldom fully appreciated at first sight.

"Poor father," the girl said at last. "I don't think he is well, Aunt Cecily. He works too hard."

"There is always a great deal of sickness in autumn," Cecily answered. "I daresay he is jaded and tired ; but we shall get clear weather by-and-by, and then the town will be in a healthier state."

"Sometimes I wish we could all go away from Bridleton," said Daisy suddenly. "Father has often talked about leaving the place. He says he has wasted his life here."

"We must make the best of our home," Cecily replied.

"You are not anxious to leave the town, aunty. It gave me a shock when I heard of Lady Jessie Boyd's offer. And oh, how glad I am that you declined it!"

"Did you think I could leave you, child?"

"No, I only felt a little afraid," Daisy answered. "I know you must be tired sometimes of living your humdrum life, as father says. But how did Lady Jessie first hear of you, Aunt Cecily?"

"You were only nine years old when Edgar Wyon died, Daisy, and of course you did not know anything about his connexions. One of his uncles was a Mr Boyd, a clergyman, who became private tutor to the young Earl of Hazeldean. Lady Jessie Westlake, the earl's sister, often shared his studies; and then a friendship sprang up between the tutor and herself."

"And Mr Boyd married Lady Jessie?"

"Yes, but not until he had most unexpectedly inherited a large fortune. He was a good man, Daisy; I am always sorry I only saw him once. He died just a year before poor Edgar."

"I understand it all 'now," Daisy said thoughtfully. "And Lady Jessie has no children?"

"There were three boys born, but two died before their father, and the last is lately dead. That is how it comes to pass that Lady Jessie is so lonely now."

"She has her own people, Aunt Cecily?"

"Yes, but she never got on quite well with them. She had been called strong-minded and self-willed, and women of her stamp generally manage to fall out with their relations. However, she is richer than any of them, and they take care to keep on good terms with her. I believe the Earl is her favourite; he is still a young man, a widower with one son."

"You would have had a pleasant life with Lady Jessie," said Daisy, in a musing tone. "But you have let the chance slip, and no one knows how long you will have to go toiling on in the stupid old school. Dear aunty, I've often heard my father say that you were made for quite another kind of life!"

"Well, Daisy, that need not hinder me from making myself useful in my present sphere," responded Cecily, with perfect cheerfulness. "Drink your tea, child, and don't concern yourself about the kind of life I was made for! I see nurse has put some of your namesakes into her nosegay."

Nurse's bouquet stood in a glass in the centre of the table; a simple] cluster of autumn beauties, one or two monthly-roses, a yellow dahlia, some laurestinus, and a bunch of Michaelmas daisies.

"Dear daisies," the girl said, touching them tenderly.

"Try to be like the flower you were named after, Daisy," Aunt Cecily went on. "I always loved your mother's daisies for blooming so cheerfully in that wretched little piece of ground. Brave things, how they flourished in spite of smoke, and dirt, and dreariness; and how they comforted poor Rose!"

The words sank deeply into Daisy's heart, as words uttered on impulse often do, whether for good or for evil. Cecily did not pursue

the subject; she talked in her cheery way about other things,—about the girls in her school, and the prizes, and the party that would be given at Christmas.

But while she talked her thoughts often strayed away to Dr Garnett, and his anxiety about Daisy's future. It was the first time that he had ever spoken of his brother as the possible guardian of his child.

The two brothers had started in life with equal advantages, and it would have puzzled a looker-on to say why the one had succeeded, and the other had failed.

But while Andrew Garnett was struggling on in Bridleton, Philip, only two years older, had become a leading London doctor, one of the greatest physicians of the day.

Philip had married, early in life, the daughter of a rich country gentleman, and was left a widower with two girls. He had never forgiven Andrew for making a foolish match, and had refused even to meet poor Rose. Mrs Philip Garnett had always spoken of her unknown sister-in-law as a person who could

not possibly be introduced to anybody, and no notice had ever been taken of Daisy.

Yet, if rumour spoke the truth, Dr Philip Garnett had not found any great comfort in his rich wife. Her father, a country squire, had married a West Indian heiress, with a dark complexion and a hot temper; and Philip's wife had inherited the complexion and the temper as well as the wealth. But the doctor managed a violent woman better than most men, and the world saw nothing amiss in the match. Mrs Philip died, and was decorously mourned for; and the doctor continued to live with his daughters in his great house in Portland Place.

This was all that Cecily Woodburn had ever heard about Philip Garnett and his family; and she had never dreamed that Andrew would seek to interest his brother in Daisy.

But now, for the first time, it suddenly struck her that if Andrew Garnett died, his child would stand sorely in need of friends. True, Cecily herself was ready to do all that a loving woman can do for a motherless girl;

but then Cecily was only a teacher in a school. Never before had she contemplated the possibility of Daisy's being left without a father.

There had been something in Andrew's look and tone that had awakened a dread in Cecily's mind. Andrew was a man of strong nerves, not given to morbid fancies and forebodings. If he believed himself to be breaking down, she could not think it an idle fear; moreover, he had looked noticeably worn and pale that day.

But although her heart was restless with anxiety Cecily was all smiles and cheerfulness. The tea was kept hot for the doctor; Daisy stirred the fire, and drew his arm-chair close to the table.

"There will be a fog this evening," she said, "and father will be damp and cold when he comes in. We must make the room look bright."

And the room was made bright with gas and fire light. The sound of the hall-door bell sent Daisy out into the entry, full of eager expectations. Her father had spoken so

lovingly to her that afternoon that she had made up her mind to take courage and greet him with a kiss. He might have had many such kisses if he had been more tender with his child; but this sweet, spontaneous caress he never felt. It was the last earthly blessing that he was destined to miss.







### CHAPTER III.

"FAREWELL ALL WISHES, ALL DEBATE."

WHILE the church-bells of Bridleton were ringing for Sunday morning service, the towns folk were discussing the sudden death of Dr Andrew Garnett. It was heart-disease, they said; he had dropped down as he was leaving a patient's house on Saturday evening. Death had been instantaneous; there were no parting words, no signs of leave-taking. He had been lifted up and carried back to his own house, dead.

So the thing that Cecily Woodburn had greatly feared had actually come to pass.

Dr Philip Garnett did not go to Bridleton to attend his brother's funeral. When the news of Andrew's death reached him he was lying sick on his bed, and the shock retarded his recovery. He remembered that, in old days, he had loved Andrew well; and

perhaps his conscience was not altogether silent. He might have been kinder to the brother who had not succeeded in life; he might have felt that success is, after all, something that ought to make us softer, not harder to others. And it was probable that poor Andrew had had drawbacks and burdens that he, Philip, had known nothing about;—it might not have been shiftlessness and folly that had hindered him in running the race. Ah me, it is strange how leniently we can regard a failure when it ends in death!

The great doctor's elder daughter wrote to Daisy in her father's name. In that letter Dr Garnett offered to take his niece into his house, and treat her as if she were his own child. It was a kind letter, stiffly written; but the stiffness was due to Rhoda Garnett, who was secretly unwilling to write it at all.

"What shall I say to uncle, Aunt Cecily?" Daisy asked in a weary tone.

The funeral was over, and she was lying on the bed in her own room, utterly languid and spent. Cecily sat by her side, sometimes

gazing anxiously at the pale young face, and sometimes letting her glance stray towards the window.

It was a true autumn day, golden and still. Even the smoke of Bridleton could not quite obscure the mellow light that came stealing over house roofs and chimneys. It was that kind of light that gives a touch of poetry to the most prosaic scenes, and even brick walls and attic windows were beautified by the soft glow.

The Michaelmas daisies were still blooming in their corner, and Cecily remembered how often her sister's eyes had sought comfort in their beauty. And then she recalled the words that she had spoken to Daisy only a few days ago, telling her to be like the flowers, flourishing bravely in their dreary nook when all their companions had passed away. Once upon a time there had been jessamine-sprays feathering out over that old wall, and late roses sighing in autumn sweetness among the yellowing leaves of the vine. There had been rich velvet dahlias and gay asters to keep the

daisies company, and hardy evergreens had rustled their leaves in cheerful mimicry of summer foliage. In those days the daisies must have lived with a pleasant group of friends, always ready to talk to them in flower-and-leaf-language. And now all were gone; and there was only that blue-grey cluster of blossoms looking up, golden-eyed, to the autumn skies.

"What shall I say to my uncle?" Daisy repeated in her tired voice.

"You must thank him for his kind offer," Cecily replied. "And you must tell him, Daisy, that you will go to him when you leave Bridleton. You have not long to stay here, my child."

"Must I really go to him? Must I leave you? Oh, Aunt Cecily, this is too cruel,—too hard!"

It was very difficult to speak firmly at that moment, but Cecily Woodburn put her own pain resolutely out of sight. Gladly would she have kept the girl with her, and toiled for her day and night. But could she, if she

did her uttermost, provide such a home for Daisy as Philip Garnett could give ?

No ; it would be a hard matter to make a home at all. Cecily, albeit there was a good deal of romance in her nature, was a practical woman who knew the price of bread and meat, and the cost of clothes. And she knew, too, that Daisy was a delicate girl who required a full share of all the comforts of life.

"Daisy," she said, earnestly, "don't you know that you are the dearest thing I have in the world ? Do you think I would let you leave me if I could keep you ?"

"If you will let me stay with you, aunty, I will teach, or sew, or scrub floors," cried Daisy, in desperation.

"There are already too many teachers, and seamstresses, dear ; and I doubt your ability for floor-scrubbing."

"Then I must *really* go," said the girl, raising herself on her elbow. "I must say good-bye to you, and live with Uncle Philip and his family ! His daughters don't want me, and they are sure to be unkind."

"It will be a bad beginning if you make up your mind to think them unkind," replied Cecily, gravely.

"But they despised my mother, Aunt Cecily, and of course they are prepared to dislike me."

"And you are prepared to be disliked! Oh, Daisy, if you go to Dr Garnett's house in that spirit you will not have a day's peace! Half the hatreds in the world begin with a mere groundless prejudice. If, as you say, your cousins are prepared to dislike you, it must be your aim to make yourself lovable, and you can succeed if you please;—I am sure of it."

"Do you think I am lovable, aunty?"

Daisy put the question with a girl's natural and innocent love of approbation. Her soft eyes looked wistfully at Cecily as she waited for a reply.

"Very lovable indeed," was the frank answer. "You have the sweetness of look and manner that your mother had;—dear Rose was remarkable for her gentle-


ness. Take care that you do not lose your charm."

"Am I in danger of losing it?" asked Daisy, anxiously.

"Yes, if you harbour ill-will, and brood over slights, whether fancied or real. Nothing injures a girl's beauty more than that bad habit of brooding; it spoils the complexion, and alters the whole character of the face. The mouth droops at the corners, the cheeks fall in, and faint lines appear on the forehead. There's a dismal picture for you, Daisy."

In spite of her sadness Daisy could not help smiling, and the smile did her good. Unconsciously her old self was coming back to her; the self that had been banished by the terrible shock of her father's death.

"You must make the best of your lot, my child," Cecily went on. "You must just imitate the Michaelmas daisies yonder, and bloom bravely in spite of uncongenial surroundings. And then, after a time, you will find that your life is not so very disagreeable, after all."



Daisy slipped quietly off the bed, and came to her aunt's side for a kiss.

"It is very likely," continued Cecily, "that you will find life pleasant enough in Portland Place. There will be plenty of visiting and entertaining, and you will make acquaintances who will ripen into friends. One can't mix in society without making friends; it may be a hollow world, but here and there are persons worth knowing. And if we cannot make friends, ay, and keep them too, we must be poor creatures indeed!"

That cheerful tone would have heartened Mr Despondency himself if he could have listened to it. It roused Daisy from her gloom, and made her ready to regard the future with hopeful eyes.

She had scarcely tasted food that day, and as Cecily stroked her white cheek, she felt that Daisy must be coaxed into eating something. But it was a relief when Daisy herself confessed that she needed refreshment.

"Let us have tea sent up here," the girl proposed. "The room downstairs is full of



dreadful memories. And I would rather see the Michaelmas daisies than the street; besides, my head aches, and I cannot bear the noise."

So a tray was carried up into the chamber where Daisy's nursery pictures still hung on the walls, and she and Cecily sat down to a little table by the window. Out of doors the golden lights were sinking lower, but the brightness had not yet faded out of the skies. A bird in a wicker-cage, hanging outside a neighbour's casement, caught one glorious ray across his prison bars; and a crying child, standing at a window, was dazzled by a slanting beam, and stopped in the middle of his wail. Gleams of sunset found their way, too, to Daisy's tea-table, and shone on her golden-brown head, and glistened in Aunt Cecily's deep-blue eyes.

"I am happier now," said Daisy, under the touch of the sunshine.

"And you will be still happier by-and-bye," Cecily answered with confidence.

"I don't know; I can hardly think so," the

girl said, coming back to the thought of separation with a long sigh. "If I might only stay with you! Aunt, shall you go to Lady Jessie Boyd, now?"

"Yes, dear; I wrote to her yesterday."

There was a pause, and Daisy drew another long breath which ended in a sob.

"Aunt Cecily, will you come to see me at Portland Place?" she asked.

"We shall meet, dear Daisy; but I hardly think I can go to Dr Garnett's house. He would not be well-pleased; it would seem to him an intrusion."

"But why should he dislike my mother's family so much, aunt?"

"He thought that your father's marriage was a great mistake; and he always persisted in believing that it spoiled his brother's whole life."

"But Aunt Cecily—" Daisy began in an indignant voice.

"We must not discuss the subject, my child," said Cecily, firmly. "I cannot trust my own judgment in the matter; I cannot be

calm and just where my poor sister is concerned. And I think, nay, I am sure, that the Garnetts will have good feeling enough to be silent on that point to you. But, Daisy, remember that you must speak of me as little as possible; if you want to spare yourself pain and annoyance, do not talk about Aunt Cecily."

"I will try to keep silence," said Daisy in tears. "But I can't love people who won't love you."

"Ah, Daisy, there would be no getting on in the world if we only liked those who liked our friends! 'Love me, love my dog,' is a bad motto for any one to start with. You must read Charles Lamb's essay on that fallacy, some day. And now, dear child, don't forget that the letter to your uncle must be written for to-night's post."





## CHAPTER IV.

"AND TEARS TAKE SUNSHINE FROM THINE  
EYES."

DR ANDREW GARNETT had left no debts, and his affairs were in better order than Cecily Woodburn had dared to hope. There was little enough for the orphan, but she would not, at any rate, go penniless to her uncle's house.

And Cecily, like a wise woman, determined that her niece should be well furnished with all that a young girl could reasonably require. A great deal of after comfort or discomfort would depend upon the Garnetts' first impressions of Daisy.

Aunt Cecily, herself, had a small sum put by for a rainy day; Edgar Wyon had left his little all to his betrothed, but as yet it had not been touched. A fairer future was now

opening before Cecily's eyes ; she was going to Lady Jessie Boyd, and her purse would be better filled, and her whole life larger and brighter than it had ever been before.

She made few purchases for Daisy and herself before they left Bridleton. They were going straight to London, and Cecily resolved that her niece should have the benefit of town costumes, chosen with care and taste. The Garnett girls should have no fault to find with their stranger-cousin's dress. Daisy would be able to meet their first sharp glances with the consciousness of being thoroughly well attired.

Dusk was deepening fast into twilight when Daisy had her first glimpse of London. She was feeling jaded and tired after the journey, for her health had not recovered from the shock of her father's death ; but she roused herself and sat upright as the cab rolled along Regent Street.

There was still a red glow of sunset in the sky, and a fresh wind blew softly into her face through the window. In spite of

natural interest in scenes entirely new, Daisy looked longer at the rosy clouds than at the crowds below them. It was the very same sky that she had watched a thousand times from her old room at home; just such an evening flush had reddened the roofs and walls at Bridleton, and had charmed the child's eyes with its fading beauty.

Even in her nursery days, her mind had always been awake to the poetry of even-song. Sunset and prayer were never divided in her thoughts, and heaven itself seemed nearest in the calm of the closing day.

She could not help thinking of the time when there would be no Aunt Cecily by her side. She was going into a little world of strangers, and was by no means sure of her welcome there; but the God of her childhood was the God of her maidenhood,—a Father, watching His child with all the ceaseless care of love. The comfort of the thought strengthened her and quieted her spirit; and Cecily saw her pale face brighten visibly.

They had taken lodgings in a very old house in a quiet West-end street. The landlady was a Bridleton woman, and had once owed her life to Dr Andrew Garnett's prompt attention and skill. She had been a poor woman when the doctor had taken her case in hand, and effected her cure ; but she was now married to a well-to-do man, and was fairly prosperous. Her house was but a short distance from Portland Place, and Cecily was glad to feel that Mrs Linford's rooms might be a future meeting-place for Daisy and herself.

To Daisy this lodging-house seemed dark as night when she stumbled in, out of the waning daylight. Their rooms were on the second floor, and the girl groped her way up long flights of stairs with weary feet. But she found herself at last in a bedroom with a quaint bow-window, and saw the last of the red sunset through the small panes of glass.

"You are very tired, Daisy," said Cecily's soft voice. There was a cushioned seat in the old window ; Daisy sank down upon it

and leaned her head against the window frame.

Long afterwards she retained the dreamy impression of that first night in town. She remembered the vast outlook of chimneys and roofs of all shapes, and the church-spire that rose high into the twilight. Cecily moved softly about the room, lighting candles and opening trunks, and came at last to Daisy's side with a pair of little slippers. She gently drew the boots off the girl's aching feet, and put on the soft shoes, and then she almost lifted Daisy from her seat.

"You must wash your face and hands in warm water, and have some tea," she said cheerily; and Daisy obeyed her.

Tea was ready in a sitting-room as old-fashioned as the bedroom. Mrs Linford had hung anti-macassars over the heavy sofa and chairs, and had tried the effect of one or two very modern and cheap pictures,—coloured woodcuts from illustrated journals; but the solid old furniture would have looked better without the white crochet, and the



woodcuts were decidedly out of place on the dingy walls. There was a good fire ; a round table was drawn close to the hearth, and spread with tea-things and covered dishes. Cecily drew forward an arm chair for her niece.

Daisy slept that night the profound slumber of utter weariness, while Cecily lay waking by her side for an hour or two. Daisy was still the chief object in her life, and the subject of her thoughts.

Cecily could never believe that she should ever be deeply interested in anything but Daisy. She was quite ready to enter cheerfully upon her new life with Lady Jessie, and to enjoy all the advantages of her new position. It would be an immense privilege to have access to a good library, and leisure to read and think. And then too, there would be the pleasure of intercourse with cultivated people, for Lady Jessie gathered round her all those who were really worth knowing.

But even these delights could not make up for the loss of Daisy.

Cecily looked wistfully at the sleeping face at her side, just visible by the glimmer of the night-light. A neighbouring church clock struck two in sonorous tones; the roar of sleepless London sounded faintly in her ears, and she thought of all that had to be done when the sun rose again.

"My poor little darling," she mused, "I must be strong for her sake. There is nothing that I would not do,—no sacrifice that I would not make for Daisy."

Daisy awoke in the morning refreshed and cheerful. No girl of her age could be quite insensible to the pleasure of shopping, and Aunt Cecily made everything as delightful as possible. They did not return to their rooms till afternoon, and then there was a cosy meal by the fire and a long talk.

They spent, on the whole, a happy fortnight in Mrs Linford's lodging-house. Parcel after parcel arrived, and was unpacked, and the mirror soon reflected a fashionable young lady in deep mourning, instead of the old school-girl Daisy.

The girl looked at the reflection of her new self with an astonished satisfaction that amused Cecily. Her new gowns were simply made, and great care had been taken to avoid too much trimming and draping; but they were of more costly materials than Daisy had ever worn before.

"I look quite like a little woman of the world," was her first observation. "When I wear this frock the servants will pay me extra attention. Of course a gentlewoman would be just as courteous to me in my plain old serge; but servants, I think, always do honour to dress."

"Not *always*," said Cecily. "We should have gone on with the plain old serge, Daisy, if we had stayed in Bridleton; but a new outfit is, in reality, a piece of respect to your uncle and his standing in the world. As to the servants, they will soon find out what manner of girl is inside this frock, and they will give her all the attention that is due to her."

Yet fortified as she was with new frocks,

and a determination to make the best of everything, Daisy was wretchedly depressed when the day came for her to go to Portland Place.

"Aunty," she said, at the last moment, "if I am *too* miserable;—if I really cannot bear my lot,—will you take care of me once more?"

Cecily soothed her, not only with the promise she required, but with assurances that the new life would be far better than her fears. But when they reached the great doctor's house, Daisy's heart sank again.

It was a large, gloomy brick house, a mansion, in fact, standing far back from the causeway. Its front windows overlooked a spacious lawn bordered by trees; but lawn and trees were uncountrified to the last degree, and Daisy thought the place would have been better without them. To her fancy her uncle's dwelling had a grim penitentiary look, and the large piece of green sward, unrelieved by shrub or flower-bed only added to its unattractiveness.

The iron gate stood open, and Daisy's spirits sank lower and lower as they drove up the carriage-drive.

It was no time for words: Cecily kissed her almost in silence as the cab stopped before the house. The hall-door was opened by a man-servant, and close behind him appeared a smart parlour-maid in the whitest of aprons. The luggage was taken in; the great house received Daisy and her modest belongings, and the door closed again.

As the cab drove away, Cecily leaned back in her seat and moaned aloud.

It was growing late in the afternoon, and lights were beginning to appear in the houses. The windows of the Langham hotel sent out a cheerful glow; vehicles were rattling up to its portals; and men and women in ulsters were ascending the steps, tired and hungry, and eager for all the comforts that money can buy. Cecily looked out upon them for a moment with a sigh of envy; *they* had wealth, she thought, and could keep their loved ones by their side. For them, there

was the light and warmth and bustle of a great hotel, with its ever-shifting crowd of faces and murmur of voices ; for her, there was only the dull room in the lodging-house, and no companions save her own sad thoughts.

Cecily was a sociable woman, made for society and not for solitude ; and to-night she had an intense longing for somebody to talk to, even if that somebody were a perfect stranger.

For weeks she had been toiling with brain and hands for Daisy ; the girl had absorbed all her time and all her heart, and now her life seemed suddenly emptied of everything that had made it interesting. The central object of existence had been taken away ; and (like Othello) she felt that her occupation was gone.

The cab set her down at Mrs Linford's door again, and she went wearily upstairs to her rooms on the second floor. Fire and gas were burning, and yet how desolate the sitting-room looked ! Cecily threw herself

into Daisy's arm-chair, and began to struggle with the desire to sob like a child.

The sobs might have ended in a fit of hysterical weeping which would have undone her for a day or two. Strong woman though she was, the strain upon her nerves had been severe, and she had unconsciously neglected herself. But it was a slight thing that checked her tears ; only the sight of a letter lying on the table.

Cecily had not many correspondents, and she knew at a glance that the letter was from Lady Jessie Boyd.

And then she remembered that Lady Jessie had a right to expect a cheerful companion ; it would be unfair to go to her new home with a clouded face and a racking headache. She had written to Lady Jessie, saying that at the end of her London fortnight she should be free ; and here was her ladyship's reply—

“ DEAR MISS WOODBURN (the letter ran),—  
I have come up to town to see my lawyer ;  
and I hope there is no reason why we should

not travel back to Hartsdowne together. You will feel lonely after the parting with your niece, so perhaps you may be willing to come to me at once.—Yours most truly,

JESSIE BOYD.

The note was written from the Langham Hotel; that very hotel that Cecily had passed a few minutes before. She wiped away her tears, and rose from the chair, feeling more like her own resolute self again.

The dreaded evening was not after all to be spent in solitude. She dined pleasantly enough with Lady Jessie and the old family lawyer, and put her sorrow quietly out of sight. After dinner, as she sat on a lounge in the hotel drawing-room, her heart ached wearily for another glimpse of Daisy; and yet the people around were helping her, unconsciously, to get back her old strength and self-control.

It was a little world of meetings and partings, as the drawing-room of a great hotel always is. Cecily's glance wandered from

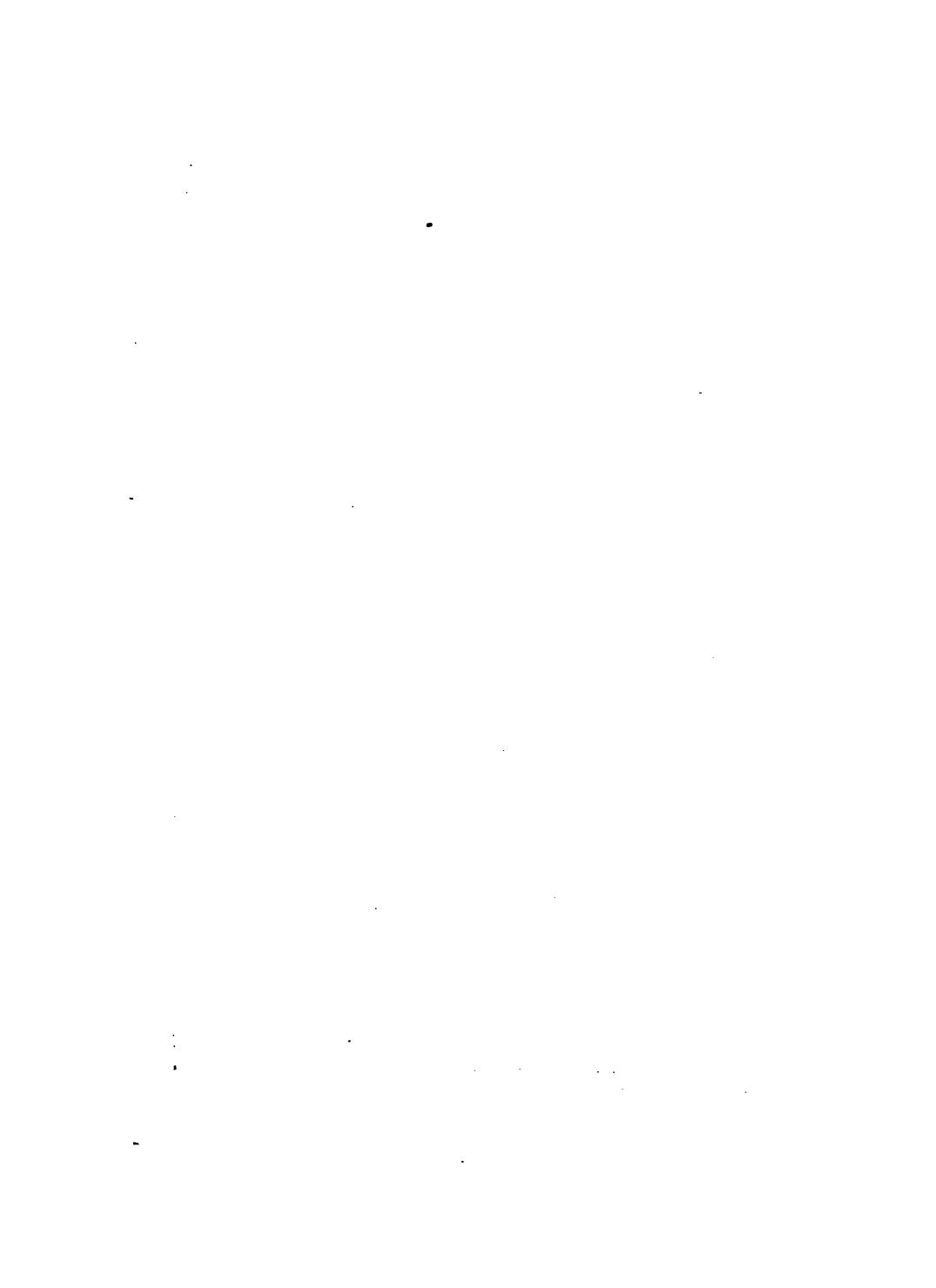


a group of lively Americans to a widow and her son, talking with subdued voices and sad eyes. Close by sat a couple on a couch ; a man and a woman, still young, but looking worn and pale, as if sickness and sorrow had been busy in the lives of both. Yet in these two faces there was a brightness that charmed, while it puzzled Cecily Woodburn. They had a great deal to say to each other ; once or twice her ear caught their low, quiet tones, and they seemed to take little interest in those around them. Some subtle instinct told her that they were speaking of trials past ; of temptations fought with, and overcome ; of the heart's gold tried in the fire, and purified. Who were they ? Cecily never thought of asking herself that question. She only knew that they impressed her with a sense of tranquil happiness and rest ; and that their very presence lifted up her spirit.

Next morning she left the hotel with Lady Jessie Boyd, whose country house was in Hartsdowne, Oakshire.



DAISY FOUND HERSELF INSIDE HER UNCLE'S HOUSE.





## CHAPTER V.

"SMALL AND LOW, THOUGH FAIR AS ANY."

WHEN Daisy found herself fairly inside her uncle's house, she summoned up all her courage, and behaved with a certain girlish dignity that was not lost upon the servants. A door opened, and a tall young lady came forward and held out her hand. Her greeting was cold and ceremonious ; but Daisy had not looked forward to a warm welcome, and was scarcely disappointed.

"Jane will take you at once to your room," said Miss Garnett, with frigid politeness. "We dine at seven ; I will send you up tea."


Daisy thanked her briefly, and followed Jane upstairs, holding her dainty little head, perhaps a trifle higher than usual. Not for the world would she let that haughty girl suspect that she wanted to cry ; and Rhoda

Garnett was, on her side, somewhat surprised to find her cousin so self-possessed.

She had made up her mind that Daisy was a clumsy country girl ; a young person who was ignorant of all conventionalities, and would put her relatives to the blush. At the sight of the delicate little creature who stood before her, perfectly well-dressed and well-mannered, Rhoda was stricken with astonishment, and so was stiffer and colder than she had meant to be.

When the trunk and portmanteaux were deposited in her room, and the door was closed, Daisy felt herself to be utterly alone indeed. It was a comfortable chamber enough ; and her own figure was reflected from head to foot in the looking-glass door of the wardrobe. The sight of her pale, scared face recalled her resolution to be brave. She began, with trembling fingers to take off jacket and hat ; and had laid them aside when Jane reappeared with a tea-tray.

" Shall I unpack your things directly, miss ?" the maid asked, setting down the tray.



Daisy said yes, and drank her tea with a fair show of composure. Jane's task was quickly done ; linen and gowns were carefully stowed away in the drawers and wardrobe, and the new-comer was once more left to herself.

How was she to get through this first dreadful evening in the society of her stranger relatives ? It was now past five o'clock, and they would be expecting her below in the drawing-room. First of all there were a few pet treasures to be unpacked, and then she must set about the business of dressing.

A wearisome business it was to poor lonely Daisy ; and when all was finished she lingered long before the glass, not in vanity, but in miserable self-distrust.

There was no kind voice to tell her that she looked well. But the graceful black gown set off her slim figure and fair face to the best advantage ; and she was, in truth, very pretty, as she timidly entered her uncle's drawing-room.

The doctor himself was not there. He

had recovered from his illness, and was again absorbed in the duties of his calling. But there were several persons in the room ; Daisy recognised her cousin Rhoda, looking tall and stern, and made straight towards her in silent desperation.

"This is my sister Maud," said Rhoda, introducing a younger girl. And then a third lady came up to be presented.

"Miss Daughton, Miss Daisy Garnett ;" Rhoda went through the introduction in that wooden manner of hers. And a kind of instinct told Daisy that Miss Daughton was the governess.

Two other ladies were present, but they were merely afternoon callers, already about to depart. They went their way ; and Daisy, seated on a couch near the fire, had leisure to observe her cousins.

They were both very dark girls, like, and yet unlike, each other. Rhoda, a stately young woman, was too thin, and looked older than her years. She had honest dark eyes, handsome enough, and features that were

fairly well cut ; but she lacked the freshness and buoyancy of early womanhood.

Maud was altogether a being of another type, not so tall as her sister, and decidedly plump. Her brown cheeks glowed with the freshest red ; she had a habit of glancing out of the corners of her eyes ; almond-shaped eyes, of a velvety darkness, shaded by thick black lashes ; and her full scarlet lips were less ready to smile than to pout. To Daisy she was lazily civil, but watched her furtively now and again, with a glance that might mean either hatred or goodwill.

Miss Daughton was a tall woman of forty, taller even than her elder pupil ; and worn and wasted to the last degree. Elegant ; perfectly well bred ; endowed with an indescribable sweetness of manner ; and dressed with consummate care and taste, she was the very person to be useful in society. Rhoda was off her hands, and Maud's education was supposed to be nearly finished ; but nobody wanted to part with Miss Daughton.

"Have you travelled far to-day?" she said sweetly to Daisy.



"No," the girl answered in her quiet voice. "I have been in town a fortnight with my aunt."

"Have you an aunt living in town?" asked Maud, opening her eyes a little wider than usual.

"No," said Daisy again. "My aunt only came here on my account. She is going back to the country."

"Was Bridleton a very horrid place?" Maud inquired.

"It was not nice; crowded towns are seldom pleasant, I suppose. And I think most people dislike Bridleton."

"You will be very happy in Portland Place," said Miss Daughton, in her soothing way. "Such a charming, breezy spot, and so central! We were all staying at the sea-side in August, and before September set in we were longing to get home. One gets dreadfully tired of the sea; but one never tires of town-life."

"I think the sea saddens one," observed Daisy, feeling that she was expected to say

something. "I was taken to a little fishing village a year or two ago, and it was terrible to hear the tales of shipwreck and loss of life. I found myself pining for woods and green fields."

"I'm thankful to say I've never seen a fishing village," said Maud. "But we heard no tales of shipwreck at Southsea, and the band on the pier was delightful. It was all quite too charming there; Miss Daughton wouldn't have wanted to leave it if she had been twenty years younger!"

Daisy was silent, and shocked at this piece of impudence. But Miss Daughton's face showed not the faintest sign of discomposure.

"Were there any woods and fields near Bridleton?" asked Rhoda, reading Daisy's feeling in her looks, and rather ashamed of her sister.

"Not very near; we had to go a long way to find them."

There was a slight pause, and Daisy felt that Maud's eyes were furtively busy with her dress.

The large drawing-room was tastefully and luxuriously furnished. Foreign things abounded ; there were costly Oriental cushions and rugs ; carvings, bowls, jars, and screens filled up all the corners. Flowers were blooming on the tables, and altogether the softly-blended colours were very pleasant to Daisy's eyes. This room was so utterly unlike her little sanctum in Holly Street, with its cheap furniture and pictures ! She thought of her own poor attempts to make her old home beautiful, and sighed.

"Do you play and sing ?" asked Miss Daughton, breaking in gently upon her musings. "We are all musical here."

"I play a little, but I do not sing," Daisy answered.

"Rhoda and Maud sing charmingly together ; they will give us a duet after dinner, I daresay. Do you draw at all ?"

"Yes, I am very fond of drawing in water-colours ; I like it better, I think, than any other occupation."

"You have quiet tastes," said Miss Daughton, in a soft, approving voice.

"I have led a very quiet life," Daisy replied; "and I have seen little of the world."

"We are worldly people here; so I hope you will learn to like worldliness," said Maud.

"It does not do to be shut up too closely," Miss Daughton remarked. "One gets morbid, you know, if one sees no company. But you had friends of your own age at Bridleton?"

"Yes, I had my schoolfellows," returned Daisy.

"Ah, school friendships are so delightful!" said Miss Daughton, with a touch of sentiment in her tone. "I often go back in thought to my school-days. I was a boarder in a dear old college that had been a convent in monastic times; there were quiet, old-fashioned gardens, with hedges of clipped yew, and sun-flowers; it was the most peaceful place in the world."

"Dreadful!" cried Maud. "I have no taste for peace and seclusion myself. And as for Miss Daughton, I believe she loves

every kind of gaiety even better than I do. She is fond of sentimentalising about that stupid old school ; but she would as soon go to purgatory as be sent there again."

There was a lazy kind of insolence in Maud Garnett's manner that would have provoked the meekest woman alive. But Miss Daughton was either thick-skinned, or self-controlled to a wonderful degree. As for Rhoda, she bent over her crewel-work, and scarcely seemed to listen to the conversation.

"Rhoda is very clever with crewels," said Miss Daughton, taking no notice of Maud's remarks. "Do you like that kind of work?"

"Yes," Daisy answered readily. "I have done a good deal of it. Just before I left home I finished the border of a table-cover."

"Did you bring it with you?" Rhoda asked, looking up with sudden interest.

"The table-cover? No; it was done for a fancy fair, held in aid of the Bridleton hospital."

"Do you remember the pattern?" Miss Daughton inquired.

"The border was composed entirely of primroses, grouped after a conventional fashion. I liked the stiffness, it was so quaint," said Daisy.

"Mine is a daffodil pattern," said Rhoda, holding up a strip of olive-green cloth.

Daisy went over to the table to inspect it; and Maud slyly scrutinised the back of her dress, and the twisted coils of her hair. She was still looking at the work, when the sound of carriage wheels was heard upon the gravel outside the house.

"There is Doctor Garnett," remarked Miss Daughton, with a glance at the clock. "Twenty minutes to seven; I thought we were nearer dinner-time."

Daisy scarcely heard her cousin's talk about the crewels at that moment. Her heart had given a quick throb at the thought of seeing her uncle. He was to be her guardian for the future; the protector who would fill the place of her lost parents; and

the girl was silently longing to love him. Her father had never allowed himself to be loved; he had always behaved as if he thought affection a bore. Would Dr Philip Garnett be like him?





## CHAPTER VI.

“THOU ART NOT FOR THE FASHION OF  
THESE TIMES.”

It is possible that Dr Garnett himself felt a little shy at the meeting with his brother's child. Since his recovery he had thought less about the estrangement from Andrew; hard work, and intercourse with the world had driven regretful feelings out of his mind, and the sight of Daisy recalled that which, perhaps, he would willingly have forgotten altogether.

“How are you, my dear?” he said, hastily kissing her on the forehead. “I hope you will soon get used to your new home.”


Daisy secretly felt that it would be a very long while before she could get used to it. But she uttered a few words of thanks for his kindness, and the dinner gong opportunely cut short the little scene.



There was a look of Andrew in the great doctor's features ; but the face was altogether stronger, and even graver than Andrew's face had been. The eyes were steel-grey, keen and steady in their gaze, and the thin lips seemed as if they were firmly locked together by the force of their owner's will. The white hair, fine and soft as silk, called attention to the beautifully-shaped head, and added greatly to the dignity of the doctor's aspect. He was not yet an old man ; but the silver locks made him venerable, and softened a little the natural sternness of his look.

Once or twice during dinner he glanced at Daisy seated next to Maud, and looking like a meek little lily of the valley beside a gorgeous azalea. Maud was undeniably a handsome girl ; but Daisy's delicate beauty lost nothing by the contrast with her cousin.

There was a quiet grace, too, in his niece's manner that the doctor noticed with a little surprise. He thought within himself that the girl's training had been left to good hands ; there was no trace of that vulgarity which he



had half expected her to inherit from her mother.

Dr Garnett's own children strongly resembled his late wife; they both had her brown skin and dark hair and eyes. But Daisy's face was cast in the Garnett mould; in the portrait of the doctor's mother, hanging over the fire-place there were the same delicately-chiselled features. She had, also, the sweet, serious look of that portrait; a look that sometimes sent Dr Garnett's thoughts roaming back to early boyhood, and made him almost fancy he could hear his mother's voice again.

And then he turned to his handsome Maud, with her pomegranate lips and glowing cheeks. The doctor had a keen insight into humanity, and he did not love any earthly thing with that passionate affection that blinds the eyes. His sight was always clear, and his judgment cool, even where his nearest and dearest were concerned. And as his glance rested on Maud, he felt that he

knew her character, and read many of the secrets of her mind every day in her face.


He had had long practice in reading faces, and they often told him a thousand things that the lips of his patients never confessed.

He saw that of his two daughters, Maud was the more disposed to be at enmity with Daisy.

Rhoda did not like this little cousin, and did not want to have her in the house. But Maud's dislike to the girl was of another kind, and had another origin. It was the instinctive hatred of dishonesty to truth; of a sensual nature to a pure and innocent soul.

"Daisy must fight her own battle," thought the doctor, mentally shrugging his shoulders.

He had given her a home, and a place in the world; and what could he do more? To change Maud's nature was beyond his power; he accepted his child as she was, defects and all. In early girlhood the evil in her had been allowed to grow almost unchecked. Maud, the beauty, had been the darling of her mother, and to chide Maud would



have been to draw down a storm upon the household. Dr Garnett did not fear his wife's temper as others did ; but he refrained, as much as possible, from giving her provocation.

The doctor disappeared after dinner, and was seen no more that evening.

The girls and the governess returned to the drawing-room, and the sisters sang the promised duet. They were well taught ; Maud's rich contralto was perhaps a thought too full to accompany Rhoda's clear, but thin soprano ; but Daisy enjoyed the music.

"Have you brought any drawings with you?" asked Miss Daughton of Daisy.

The two girls had quitted the piano ; Rhoda had returned to her beloved crewels ; and Maud, who seemed to have few occupations, was lounging on her favourite sofa.

"Yes," Daisy admitted, with some reluctance.

"Do let us see them," Miss Daughton entreated.

"Do let us see them," echoed Maud,

mimicking the governess's manner. "You need not be afraid of rivalry ; neither Rhoda nor I can draw a bit," she added, more seriously. "Jane shall go to your room and unpack your portfolio."

"It is already unpacked," Daisy replied.

She had no wish to display the drawings, but instinct and good breeding urged her to satisfy Maud's curiosity. Her cousins had been entertaining her, and they had a claim to be amused in their turn.


"I daresay the drawings are abominably bad," said Maud, when Daisy had left the room. "I never saw such an uninteresting, insignificant girl ;—I don't believe she can do anything but sit still and simper."

"She does not simper ; she looks melancholy," corrected Rhoda.

"She smirks when she speaks. And she is awfully colourless and lackadaisical."

"She is not badly dressed."

"No ; she has been spending her little all on town dressmakers. I shall represent the case to our father, and assure him that she won't require any more gowns for ages."



"You may represent anything you please," said Miss Daughton, sagaciously; "but Dr Garnett will not be moved by your representations, Maud."

"You don't know the extent of my power over him!"

"Yes, I do. I know you always think you are going to succeed, and you invariably fail."

"But we will not let him spend his money on this little intruder,—will we, Rhoda?" cried Maud, angrily appealing to her sister.

"Don't talk nonsense," Rhoda replied. "He will spend his own money, not ours; you know. Of course I don't want the girl, and I think it is ridiculous to have her here. But when my father insists, nobody can turn him from his purpose."

"If my mother had been alive, the creature would never have been suffered to come," said Maud.

"I don't know that she could have kept Daisy away," returned Rhoda. "Even in my mother's life-time my father's will generally

*Michaelmas Daisy.*

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prevailed. There is no sense in fighting against him."

"That is exactly my opinion," said Miss Daughton. "You may as well strive with fate, as with Dr Garnett. He has made up his mind to adopt this Daisy, and adopted she will be. Unless she ever does something positively disgraceful he will never cast her off."

"I wish she would turn out badly," Maud muttered.

"I don't think she will turn out badly, dear;—I fancy that your amiable wishes will never be realised," Miss Daughton answered, with exceeding sweetness. "It is your big, showy, sensuous beauty who generally brings discredit on the family,—not the meek soul that loves the shade."

"Why don't you write a poem upon her?" cried Maud contemptuously. "What a devoted champion she has found in you!"

"Have you taken a liking to Daisy, Miss Daughton?" asked Rhoda, pausing in her work.

"No;—I do not feel the slightest interest in her," replied the politic governess. "I have merely been trying to make Maud see that she will remain here, and therefore we must make the best of her."

Daisy's footstep put an end to the conversation. She came quietly into the room with her portfolio, and laid it down upon a table. The governess and Maud seized upon it at once.

One glance at its contents convinced both that Daisy did not draw abominably.

The portfolio was full of unfinished sketches and carefully completed drawings; and all bore the stamp of talent of a very high order. Some of the studies showed a richness and breadth of colour that absolutely astonished Miss Daughton; and yet the subjects treated by the young artist were often exceedingly prosaic. Daisy had had to make the best of her surroundings in Holly Street.

Here was a view of the back of a neighbour's house, with the wicker bird-cage hanging outside the garret window, and the sunset



casting a warm glow over the dull bricks. And there was the clump of Michaelmas daisies, just as Daisy had seen them from her own room, with the smoky wall for a background. She had that gift, closely allied to genius, of bringing out the beauty that lurks in common things, and making it perceptible to other eyes as well as her own.

There were several sketches of rural scenes, although these were fewer in number. She had seized the opportunities afforded her by school excursions, and long rambles with Aunt Cecily; and thatched cottages and bits of meadow and woodland were to be found in her collection.

Even Rhoda had deserted her crewels to examine the drawings. The three were standing round the table, exclaiming, commenting, and asking questions, while Daisy sat quietly on the sofa.

"Whose house is this?" Maud inquired.

She was holding up the picture of an old mansion, built in the Tudor style, and overgrown with rich masses of ivy. The sun

was going down behind the chimneys, and the crests of tall firs stood out darkly against a saffron sky. You could see the white roses clambering over the heavy porch, and clustering round the mullioned windows; and you might almost fancy the sweetness of their evening breath. There was a home-like rest, a stately peace about the grand old place that the Garnetts and their governess felt at once; and they had looked long at the drawing before Maud put her question.

"That is Hurst Hall in Woodshire, the seat of the Hurstones. It was my grandmother's old home," Daisy answered, in her quiet voice.

She had not reckoned upon the effect of these words on her hearers. They started and exchanged glances of profound astonishment.

"Have you ever seen this place?" Rhoda asked.

"No; that drawing was done by my grandmother, long before I was born."

There was a suppressed murmur of sur-

prise, and then a pause. Some seconds passed before any one spoke again.

"How did she come to be your grandmother, if she belonged to the Hurstones?" said Maud, bluntly.

Daisy's delicate face flushed a little; the tone was offensive. But her voice was quite calm and steady when she replied—

"She married, against the wishes of her friends, a Captain Ashley. They never forgave her, even when she was left a widow. And then she took a second husband—my grandfather, Mr Woodburn."

There was another silence. The drawing was closely examined again, and Rhoda found initials and a date in one corner.

"Was Mrs Woodburn living when her daughter married Dr Andrew Garnett?"

It was Miss Daughton who asked this question.

"No; my grandmother had been dead a year before my father and mother first met," Daisy responded, rather wearily. She was beginning to wish that they would drop the subject.

But Maud had no notion of restraining her curiosity. In vain did Miss Daughton give her a warning touch; she shook off the governess's hand with haughty impatience.

"How did you know all these things?" she demanded, in her curt fashion. "If your mother died while you were a baby, who told you your grandmother's history?"

"I heard it from my mother's sister," answered Daisy, coldly.

"Oh, that is the aunt who brought you to town? Where is she now? Are there any more aunts?"

"Aunt Cecily lives in the country. She is the only aunt I have."

"She is poor, I suppose? If she had been rich she would have taken you to live with her?"

"You are quite right," said Daisy, rising from her seat, and taking possession of her portfolio. "She would have taken me if she had been rich enough to provide for me. I am very tired to-night," she added, turning to Rhoda; "I should like, if you please, to go to my room?"

"Certainly," Miss Garnett answered, courteously. "And if you are not well to-morrow I will send up your breakfast. Our breakfast hour is half-past eight."

"Thank you; but I am accustomed to rise early," Daisy replied. "I shall be quite well after a night's rest."

There was silence for a minute or two after her departure. And then Maud spoke out in an ill-tempered tone.


"She was sulky because I questioned her about her family. What right has she to resent anything?"

"I advise you not to press her too far," said Miss Daughton.

"My father has taken her out of charity. She will have to get used to my ways," cried Maud, beating the sofa-pillow with her plump hand. "I shall not tolerate any airs."

"Nonsense, Maud," said Rhoda, "she was inoffensive enough to-night. You will have to tolerate her, you know, and you had better begin by being civil."

"She prides herself on her connection with



the Hurstones. I daresay that story about her grandmother was all a lie!"

"I don't care if it was," Rhoda returned, indifferently. "But I hate scenes, and I hope you are not going to make them."





## CHAPTER VII.

“THESE BURS ARE IN MY HEART.”

DAISY GARNETT's first evening in her uncle's house was the unhappiest time that her young life had yet known.

She had felt sorrow ; but never before had she had any experience of enmity. Daisy's acquaintances had all been her friends ; in her little world everybody, save her father, had made a pet of her.

In her quiet home, servants had loved her from her nursery days, and had thought it no trouble to wait on so gentle and grateful a child. At school, teachers had praised her progress, and school girls had given her their hearts, and elected her the queen of their little community. Aunt Cecily had been always at hand with tender words of counsel ; reproof was seldom needed, for Daisy's duties were conscientiously performed, and

hers was an easily satisfied nature, seldom at war with its surroundings. And so kind had life been that an enemy was a mere word to her; a word that described a something she had never encountered nor seen.

But Maud's look and tone had plainly told her that she had found an enemy at last. Maud's questions had been ill-bred; and the manner in which they were asked was insulting. Daisy could not forget the curl of those red lips, and the flash of the scornful eyes.

She bolted her chamber door, and then sat down in a chair by the bedside to think.

How was she to face her future life in this house? How could she bear the daily and hourly contact with a girl who would lose no chance of wounding her feelings? These were questions that perplexed her soul, and oppressed her with the overwhelming gloom of despondency.

And then came a thought that answered the weary questioning, and set the troubled little spirit at rest. A Friend, closer than a



brother, would be near her, even here ; and a Divine guidance would lead her safely along this thorny path.

Daisy rose from her chair to kneel down by the bed, and pray with all the hope and confidence of her childish days. In this house was her appointed place ; here was the home that had been provided for her in her need, and she must learn to live in it.

Her thoughts wandered away to the thousand homeless ones in mighty London that night,—to starving children seeking rest in the door-ways and under the arches,—to ragged women roving by the river's brink, and tempting death,—to desperate men straying aimlessly along the streets, without a hope to brighten the coming morrow. Was her heart so full of bitterness that she could find no gratitude for simple bodily comfort ? Were food, and shelter, and raiment worth nothing ?

"I am growing wicked," mused Daisy, penitently. "And it is only the wicked who can have their lives spoiled ; Maud cannot

make me utterly miserable unless I help her to do it. If I remember my good things, and am thankful and prayerful, there will always be one part of my life that she can never touch."

There was sleep for Daisy when this comfort had once found its way into her mind. Her spirits rose; she even grew cheerful enough to notice the pretty *cretonne* curtains lined with pale yellow, and closed her eyes at last with the impression that flowers were growing round her bed.

She slept soundly, and awoke with the expectation of finding Cecily by her side. But no Cecily was there, and instead of the dingy lodging-house chamber, she was in a room which Rhoda's good taste had made pretty and bright. The incidents of last night crowded back into her mind, and daunted her spirit for a moment; but she rose rested and strengthened, resolved to face her life whatever it might be.

There was a letter from Cecily, written from the Langham Hotel, and containing

a few lines full of hope and cheery counsel. It was a bright beginning to the day, Daisy read the note through twice, then washed and dressed as quickly as possible, and hastened downstairs.

Dr Garnett's elder daughter made a point of being punctual and she had just taken her seat at the head of the breakfast-table as Daisy entered.

"Good morning, Daisy," said the doctor. "Glad to see you downstairs in good time; Maud is always late. Hope you slept well."

"Quite well uncle, thank you," answered Daisy, cheerfully.

Miss Daughton gave her a swift glance, she half expected Daisy to be sulky after last night's questioning.

"Do you begin studies to-day, Daisy?" asked Rhoda, handing her a cup of coffee.

"She is hardly settled enough to begin yet," said the governess in an indulgent tone.

"I am quite ready," Daisy replied; "I think the studies will help me to feel settled."

Dr Garnett looked at his niece with silent

approval in his cold eyes. He saw that she would be wise enough, to make the most of her advantages.

"It will be quite pleasant to have a second pupil again," said Miss Daughton. "Maud has found it slow work to study without her sister."

Breakfast was nearly finished when Maud made her appearance.

Her father gave her a critical look. She had a sleepy aspect, her dark hair was roughly dressed, and her gown carelessly put on.

"You won't improve your complexion, Maud, by lying long in bed," he said with a sneer.

"I am always saying so," remarked Miss Daughton.

"The mornings are getting cold and dark," grumbled Maud, suppressing a yawn.

"They will be colder and darker yet," said Dr Garnett, "and you are as well able to face cold and darkness as the rest of us."

He rose as he spoke, and went out to his brougham. It could not be said of the busy

doctor, that he shirked any of the duties of life; but that life lacked the sweetness of many humbler lives. It was hard and cold, acknowledging no guiding power save that of a strong intellect and a sound judgment. And Dr Garnett felt no need of any other guidance, and had never sought it in the whole course of his successful career.

"I suppose somebody has been complaining of me to father," said Maud, when he was gone.

"No one complained," Rhoda answered. "You know he dislikes your being late."

"And I dislike being early. What is there to get up for? I can't imagine why it should be considered a sin, to lie in bed in the morning!"

"It is not a sin, dear Maud," Miss Daughton said sweetly. "It is a little weakness that ought to be overcome."

"What is the difference between a weakness and a sin?" Maud demanded. "That sounds like a riddle, doesn't it? Can you tell me, Daisy?"

"A weakness is a sin in its early stage," Daisy replied. "I suppose it bears the same relation to a sin, that the bud bears to the flower."

"Good gracious, here's a philosopher in petticoats! Miss Daughton, you may regard my education as completed. I decline to pursue my studies with a person who can prove that my weaknesses are vices in embryo. It is quite too horrid."

Daisy laughed outright.

The laugh exasperated Maud, whose temper had been already upset by her father's rebuke.

"At any rate I don't care to set up for being clever," she cried in a rage. "It's enough for me to feel that I'm well connected, and handsome, and not poor! Above all things I should hate to be poor, and have to live on relations who didn't want to keep me."

Daisy's lily cheeks turned to red roses in a moment.

Miss Daughton and Rhoda exchanged glances, and there was a dead silence.

Maud went on savagely with her breakfast, and Daisy sat motionless as a statue, feeling as if she could never eat or drink in that house again.

She had left her room that morning with the determination to live her life cheerfully, and shake off Maud's disagreeable speeches as she would have shaken burs off her skirts. But now she felt herself too severely tried.

"Well," said Rhoda, breaking the pause, "I am not going to sit facing the coffee-pot all the morning. So, Maud, I will leave you to finish your breakfast without me."

Rhoda's rising was a signal of relief to Daisy and the governess. They followed her example, and quietly left the room.

"Will you come to me in the school-room, presently?" said Miss Daughton in her pleasant tone to Daisy.

"Yes, I will join you in a few minutes," Daisy answered calmly. "Some of my school-books are upstairs, and I will unpack them. You may, perhaps, wish to see what I have been doing."

Miss Daughton watched the little figure flitting up the wide staircase, and wondered within herself at Daisy's self-possession.

But all Daisy's outward composure deserted her when she found herself alone in her room. She flung herself down on her knees with a bitter cry that was heard even outside the closed door.

It was Rhoda who heard it. Rhoda was on her way to one of the spare chambers where she kept a stock of crewels and patterns. The cry startled her, and brought her to a momentary standstill. But it was not repeated, and she passed on.

She was not disposed to like Daisy, and she resented her presence in the house. Her resentment was, however, of a quiet kind, kept in check by the conviction that it was useless to strive against her father's will.

When Dr Garnett had said that he intended to adopt his niece, Rhoda had uttered her protest in a calm tone. She had been answered quite as calmly, but in a manner that showed her the hopelessness of any argument.



And then Rhoda, with cool common-sense, had made up her mind to accept the nuisance. She regarded Daisy with a cold dislike, but knew her duty too well to be discourteous to her father's niece.

As to Maud, Rhoda endured her sister's unpleasant ways with stoical calmness. Unless provoked too far, she rarely resented anything that Maud said or did. She had learnt, as a child, to bear the terrible outbreaks of her mother's temper with fortitude, and had grown up into girlhood, steeled against the stormy nature which Maud seemed to have inherited.

But that cry from Daisy awoke a question in her mind,—how did Maud's conduct strike a stranger?

Rhoda had a full share of family pride. Her cheeks were burning as she went her way to the spare room; and she remembered the intolerable shame she had felt when her mother's passions had frightened every one in the house. Poor Mrs Garnett's outbursts had been partly the result of disease; but

Rhoda felt that this excuse could not be made for Maud.

Just then, she felt more anger to her sister than pity for Daisy. Maud had been rude and ridiculous ; if that kind of thing were too often repeated, the servants would talk of it, and Daisy would be looked upon as an interesting martyr. It was all too annoying and absurd.

Rhoda wondered what Miss Daughton thought about the matter ? But Miss Daughton, although she had lived for more than four years in the house, had not been known to betray her real thoughts upon any subject. Rhoda was quite shrewd enough to know that, in spite of daily intercourse and apparent intimacy, she had never yet caught a single glimpse of Miss Daughton's real self.

"I don't believe she cares a straw about any of us," mused Miss Garnett, unlocking a cupboard and absently taking out a bundle of crewels. "She only stays here because she is well placed and well paid. And, after all, it must be confessed that we are not a very lovable household !"

Meanwhile Daisy in her room was doing her utmost to keep back a flood of tears.

She had promised Cecily that she would make the best of her lot ; but then she had never realised how hard that lot would be. And yet perhaps it would not always be so hard ; somewhere in the future there was surely a time of comfort and peace awaiting this troubled little spirit. Resolutely conquering her weakness, the girl rose to her feet again, and went downstairs to face her life with a brave heart.

The school-room was not, and never had been, a cheerful apartment, although it had been used as a nursery when the Garnett girls were children. Mrs Garnett, always terribly irritable, had declared herself quite unable to bear the noise of her own babies, and so they were banished to this gloomy room at the back of the house, with only a dead, blank wall outside the window.

"This is many degrees worse," thought Daisy, "than my old room in Holly Street ; and yet I daresay some people would prefer

that blank wall to the garret windows of my former neighbours. For my part, I loved those garret windows, and I had a friendliness for the faces I saw there, although some of them wanted washing badly enough. Shall I ever get used to that dreadful wall,—all dead, dark slate-colour, without the faintest touch of warmth to brighten it?"

But these thoughts could not be read in Daisy's face, which was now as calm and fair as a white flower. She laid a pile of books upon the table, and then turned to Miss Daughton, as if quietly awaiting her directions.

"Sit in this chair," said the governess, with her ready sweetness. "It used to be Rhoda's favourite seat; one can study much better when one is in perfect comfort. It has always been a mystery to me how girls ever learnt anything in the hard bench-and-back-board days. Were you a boarder at your school?"

"Only a day-boarder; the house was very near to my home."

"Ah, then you have never experienced the full force of school discipline! It is very hard on girls sometimes; junior teachers are so apt to be tyrants. Mrs Garnett would never send Rhoda and Maud to school; they have had home-instruction always."

At that moment the door opened, and Maud's face appeared. It vanished, however, in an instant, and the door was sharply shut again.

Miss Daughton took no notice of this apparition. She went on examining the books, and asking questions, and Daisy heaved a sigh of relief. It was clear that Maud would not share her studies that morning.

A little later Maud sauntered into the drawing-room where her sister was writing letters.

"What have you done with the last volume of 'Stolen Waters,' Rhoda?" she asked sullenly.

"It is upstairs in my room," Rhoda answered, without raising her eyes.

"Why did you hide it away? It is very

annoying to lose sight of books when one is reading them."

"My father told me not to leave it here, Maud. He says it is not a good book for girls to read, and he does not wish it to be seen on our table."

"Well, anyhow, I am going to finish it, and I want it at once."

"It will be better for you to go into the school-room," said Rhoda laying down her pen. "You know that father has forbidden you to read novels in study hours."

"I don't mean to study any more. That conceited little thing may have Miss Daughton all to herself."

"Absurd, Maud! You will not have done with Miss Daughton till you are seventeen. And Daisy won't interfere with you; she seems quite inoffensive."

"Inoffensive!" repeated Maud, furiously. "The very sight of her is an offence; it is an intolerable nuisance to have her here. She is a pert, pretentious upstart, and wants to put herself on a level with us; but I won't

have it. I'll find out ways of making the house unbearable, and she will be driven to leave it."


Rhoda looked with cold contempt at her sister's angry face.

"You are not mistress of the house," she said in her coolest tone. "Your blustering only makes you ridiculous; if you go too far, my father will deal with you as if you were an unruly child. It would not be pleasant to be degraded in the eyes of Daisy and the servants."

"I won't be degraded," cried Maud, with a stamp.

"Now, listen Maud," said Rhoda rising. "It is seldom that I let your absurd temper ruffle me, but I must tell you plainly that I will not have you making scenes. Either behave decently and rationally, or be prepared to be shut up in your room. That is what will be done with you if I make complaints."

The girls faced each other for a few seconds in silence; the one stern and collected, the other hot and enraged.



"You are a mean creature, Rhoda," panted Maud. "If you would side with me we might turn Daisy out. But you are low enough to take it all calmly, and you want to trample on my spirit. I do think you are the most contemptible coward in the whole world."

"I do not mind being called names when no one is listening," said Rhoda, with quiet scorn. "I have done my duty, and warned you."







## CHAPTER VIII.

“YOU ARE NOT ONE TO BE DESIRED.”

MISS DAUGHTON found Daisy a most tractable pupil, already far better informed on many subjects than Rhoda or Maud. As for Maud, she profited by her sister's counsel, so far as to appear in the school-room, and make a feint of studying; Miss Daughton met her insolent laziness with inexhaustible patience, while Daisy seemed outwardly unmoved by the disagreeable speeches that her cousin chose to make. On the whole, things went on more quietly than could have been expected, and Daisy had glided naturally into her place in the house.

But she was not intimate with any one. When Miss Daughton, prompted as much, perhaps, by curiosity as by real interest, tried

to gain a glimpse into her pupil's inner life, she found the doors quietly closed against her. Daisy was not communicative; questions were answered with the utmost gentleness and courtesy, but the answers told as little as possible. Simple as she seemed, this girl of sixteen was more than a match for the accomplished woman of the world.

Autumn passed into winter, and in the doctor's house there were busy preparations for Christmas.

"Everybody is coming," said Maud, one morning at the breakfast table. "Here is a note from Gertrude Sandon; she promises to arrive on Saturday."

A little latter in the day, Daisy gathered that Miss Sandon was Maud's bosom friend; the only person of whom Maud was ever known to speak with unqualified praise. Other guests were expected too; the spare chambers were swept and garnished, and Rhoda, whose housewifely duties were always thoroughly performed, was fully occupied in arranging, and directing the servants. Studies

were postponed till after Christmas, and Daisy had a great deal of time on her hands.

Miss Sandon was the first to arrive. Saturday afternoon came, and brought a slim little lady, no taller than Daisy, who was muffled up to her nose in costly furs. Maud rushed out to meet her in the hall, and there were rapturous embraces and exclamations. Gertrude was *so* cold, *so* hungry, *so* delighted to see darling Maud again.


All these remarks were uttered in a silvery little voice that might have belonged to a fairy; a voice that, young as it was, was toned by the training of society.

"Miss Sandon is a charming girl," said Miss Daughton to Daisy. "She has perfect style; you will be delighted with her, everybody is."

"She dresses exquisitely," observed Rhoda, "we shall have Maud wanting to copy her costumes."

"I suppose her people are well off," said the governess.

"Not very," Rhoda replied. "In fact Gertrude Sandon is rather a mystery to me."



Her father is dead, and Gertrude and her mother live with General Wade, the mother's brother. Their means are limited, I think; yet Gertrude is always dressed like a princess."

"When she was here last, she found out some little nobody of a dressmaker, and employed her," said Miss Daughton.

"Yes; I remember. But the little nobody was clever; I saw some of the things she made. Gertrude has such skill in directing and combining, that I believe she gets some of her best costumes very cheaply done."

Maud had gone to Gertrude's room, and the pair did not appear again till half-an-hour before dinner. Then they entered the drawing-room together, and Daisy had her first full view of Miss Sandon,

Gertude Sandon was nineteen, and was one of those girls who are old in girlhood, and young in womanhood. She had a very small face with faulty features; but a bright complexion, and large lustrous eyes dazzled the gazer at once. The rose-flush on her

cheeks was vivid, and the eyes were magnificent—a clear hazel with long dark lashes. Light-brown hair was frizzed and brought low upon the forehead, and the great eyes flashed their quick glances under a mass of tiny curls. Her gown, a wonderful combination of black and gold satin and creamy lace, fitted her to perfection ; and gown and wearer seemed expressly made for show and society.

Altogether she was an interesting study for quiet Daisy. The grace with which she managed that spoon-shaped train of hers ; the glimpses that one caught of Cinderella feet encased in fairy shoes ; the exquisite art of movement and manner, quite fascinated an observer to whom all these charms were new. And yet, as Daisy said to herself, she seemed almost too finished, and polished, and woman-of-the-worldish for a mere girl of nineteen.

What becomes of all our young girls ? This is a question that is often asked nowadays, when the pinafores pet seems to start

all at once into the belle, without passing through any intermediate stage. Are the nursery and the drawing-room too near together? And are the world's lessons learned too early, and put into practice too soon?

There is some truth, perhaps, after all in the murmurs of the old folks, when they extol the sampler-working damsels of long ago, with their ready blushes and simple ways. We are going back to antique furniture and old-fashioned needlework; is it possible that there may also be, in some minds, a growing desire to revive the old-fashioned girls? There is something that touches and charms us in Sir Peter Teazle's first impression of his young wife:—"Recollect, Lady Teazle, when I first saw you sitting at your tambour, in a pretty figured linen gown, with a bunch of keys at your side; your hair combed smooth over a roll, and your apartment hung round with fruits in worsted, of your own working." A picture simple enough, and yet it sets us longing for

a glimpse of the maiden of other days ; the girl who went to bed soon after the sun, and rose—

“When winking Mary-buds begin to ope their golden eyes.”

A world of half-forgotten sweets returns with her image ; the breath of lavender and cabbage-roses ; the scent of home-made conserves and cowslip-wine, and the faint fragrance of *pot pourri*. And we feel that, in some subtle way, those old perfumes symbolize a certain freshness and innocence that are lacking in these enlightened times. We have got the “pretty figured linen gown” again ; but not the artless wearer.

Gertude was civil to Daisy, but honoured her with little notice after their introduction. One or two gentlemen had been invited to dine ; a witty young barrister ; a retired military man ; a rising doctor ; and a successful author ; and when they made their appearance Miss Sandon’s eyes and tongue were busy indeed.

Her liveliness did not flag while dinner was going on. It would have been hard to

find out what Dr Garnett thought of this gay young guest, with her flashing eyes and silvery chatter ; he was now, as ever, the cool, courteous host, whose face never revealed the faintest shade of feeling. Rhoda and Maud were both looking their best in black velvet gowns, relieved by scarlet camellias from the greenhouse. Daisy, too, had been allowed to cut a camellia ; but hers was pure white, and rested like a snow flake on the bosom of her mourning dress.

The dinner came to an end, but not before Miss Daughton had discovered that Daisy had attracted notice.

Gertrude Sandon was seated with the author at her side, and she certainly exerted herself to the uttermost to secure his whole attention. This young lady always made a point of expending a great deal of force upon lions ; and Mr Alderstone, a popular writer, was a lion indeed.

At last Rhoda gave the signal for rising, and the ladies betook themselves to the drawing room again. It then became evi-



dent to Daisy that Miss Sandon was glad to rest and be quiet for a little while ; she ~~was~~ either really tired, or it was not worth while to be agreeable. She suppressed a yawn, leaned back wearily in a low chair, and half closed those brilliant eyes that had dazzled everybody a few minutes ago.

“You are feeling used up, Gerty,” said Maud, with more kindness than was usual with her. “Some coffee will do you good.”

“I have been going out a good deal lately,” Gertrude admitted languidly.

“You always do go out a good deal,” Rhoda remarked. “Don’t you ever give yourself time for rest ?”

“Well—no ; I haven’t had much rest since I was sixteen. I have been staying at various houses, meeting crowds of people ; and what with dancing, lawn-tennis, riding, skating, and making myself generally agreeable, I am rather a wreck, you know.”

“Don’t make her talk,” said Maud. “Why should she exert herself for nothing ? Just be quiet, Gerty, till Mr Alderstone comes in,

he is worth talking to, and he will want to engross you."

"Why should you think he will want to engross me?" Gertrude asked, with a little smile.

"Because you are always queen of every circle," Maud answered, admiringly. "No one is noticed when you are in a room."

Miss Daughton, too, smiled. Daisy, in a corner as usual, was regarding Gertrude with the deepest interest; observing every movement of the little figure, and feeling half fascinated and half repelled.

It was not long before the gentlemen came in. At the first sound of their footsteps Gertrude changed her position slightly, arranged the folds of her gown with a deft hand, and was ready to receive attention.

But the lion of the evening did not make for that low chair in which Miss Sandon was so gracefully seated. He walked straight to Daisy's sofa in the corner, and deliberately placed himself by her side.

Four pairs of eyes followed Mr Alderstone.

Miss Daughton's glance was curious and amused; Rhoda's was astonished; Maud's look was first blank surprise, and then anger; and Miss Sandon's face betrayed for an instant decided annoyance.

But Daisy was altogether unconscious of the looks bestowed upon herself and her companion. Mr Alderstone began to talk to her, and, quite naturally and easily, she found herself carrying on a conversation. He seemed to choose the very topics that interested her most; sorrow, and shyness, and loneliness were all forgotten for the time, and she followed him into the realms of thought and fancy.

It was the happiest evening that she had ever spent in her uncle's house. But the pleasure soon came to an end, and Mr Alderstone rose to depart.

"Good night," he said, with genuine kindness, "I shall send you that little book of mine, and hope to meet you again."

As he turned away she suddenly encountered Maud's angry face, and came out of her dream.

"That girl is not fit for society," she heard Maud mutter to Gertrude; and Rhoda's good-night was a degree colder than usual. Poor Daisy went upstairs to her room, conscious that they had spoiled her recollection of past enjoyment. She could not recall her evening with pleasure now, they had cast a cloud upon the brightness, and made her feel like an ill-behaved child.

"I suppose they never will like me," she thought, when her door was closed. "I seem to offend them unawares; it is all very hard and disagreeable. Evidently they don't wish to see me happy!"

And just for five minutes Daisy almost believed herself to be a miserable girl, who had no business to be in the world at all. But she soon began to think better thoughts, and to remember that she had a place in that world which must be filled. It depended upon herself whether it was filled worthily or unworthily; and some of Aunt Cecily's sayings found their way back into her mind. "Don't let the spirit take all the strength out

of the body," she used to say. "I know that heart-ache generally does turn to head-ache; but we should give the head as much rest as we can."

To sit up late in a cold room, and nurse one's wrongs, is a great unkindness to one's physical frame. Daisy found herself getting chilly and faint, and sharp pains began to dart through her temples. Common sense prevailed over depression; she went to bed with all speed, and sleep soon came to "knit up the ravelled sleeve of care," and undo all the ill that an unquiet mind had wrought.

But if she could have looked inside a certain room that was not far from her own, she would have seen that there were crosses far heavier to bear than hers.

After darkness and slumber had settled down on all the other chambers in Dr Garnett's house, Gertrude Sandon lay pondering and planning, her busy head resting on her hand.

There was a fire in Gertrude's room; a luxury that had never been granted to Daisy,

although Rhoda and Maud always went to bed by a cheerful blaze in cold weather. The young guest had fixed her gaze upon the glowing embers, and the mask that she had worn all day was now quite laid aside. You would hardly have recognised the girl's face, as she lay and watched the red light and the falling ashes; her expression was utterly changed; and all the sparkling vivacity was gone.

Once or twice her lips moved, and sighs and broken sentences escaped them. Despite her worldliness, Gertrude was a mere girl in years, over-young to bear the full weight of the burdens that she had made for her own shoulders.


"What shall I do?" she muttered; "how shall I get out of all these dreadful difficulties? There's Maud;—no, no; all the Garnetts cling to their money. And I can't go to the old quarters any more; I—yes, I am ashamed sometimes. I wish —."

Her head moved restlessly, and her eyes glittered in the fire-light. By-and-bye the

muttering began again, and then both her voice and face grew softer. A certain plaintiveness crept into her tone, and her lips quivered, although she shed no tears. "It might have been all different if my father had lived, Poor father, dying far away in India,—how sad it was! And my mother is so fragile and weakly that she never has been, nor can be, a guide. But some girls would have acted differently;—I think that little pale-faced Daisy would. Is she really good and simple, or merely an actress? I believe she is real;—the shams generally expose themselves somehow. That Mr Alderstone is a shrewd man, and he liked her. Nobody would ever like me if all were known; and if things go on ——."

The bright restless eyes closed at last, just as the fire was dying out. Without a prayer, without a thought of One who is a very present help in trouble, Gertrude Sandon laid down her tired head, and slept soundly till late in the morning.

There are girls who murmur at the peace-



ful routine of home, and cry out that the romance of life is long delayed. Gertrude Sandon had seen a great deal of so-called romance, and had known many forms of excitement; yet few of her simple-minded sisters would, I think, have envied her dreams that night.

It is a perilous thing to complain when our path lies through green pastures, and beside the waters of comfort. We know not what we ask when we desire change, and plead for a break in the monotony of our course. We may be praying for the tempest that shall sweep away all that we hold dearest and best, or for the blinding mist that shall hide the old waymarks from our sight.

After all, there can be little that is tedious in an unselfish life. The question that the bold yeoman asked of Lady Clara Vere de Vere may be answered with a ready yea by every girl in England.

"Are there no beggars at your gates,  
Nor any poor about your lands?"



The very quietest nook in the civilized world contains ample materials for work ;— work that may win the master's smile, and bring contentment to the worker's heart.





## CHAPTER IX.

SUNDAY.

DAISY went downstairs to breakfast with a firm conviction that something unpleasant was awaiting her. Rhoda, the doctor, and Miss Daughton were in their usual places at the table; Gertrude Sandon was still in her room, but Maud, unusually brisk, made her appearance soon after her cousin.

"It's a great mistake," Maud began, "for people to go into society when they are not used to its ways. They are sure to do something ill-bred, and make others uncomfortable. That was Gerty's remark to me last night."

"Will Gertrude breakfast upstairs?" Rhoda asked.

"Yes; she was knocked up by yesterday's journey, poor darling."

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"Yes ; she was knocked up by yesterday's journey, poor darling."

"Your cousin was animated, not elated," rejoined the doctor icily. "You should study words and their meanings, Rhoda; it would do you good, and help you to express yourself more happily."

That was Rhoda's rebuke for attempting to side with Maud against Daisy; a rebuke that stung her like a bitter frost wind.

And then the doctor laid aside his book, got up from the table without glancing at any body; and went out to his carriage without another word.

Daisy was left mistress of the field, and she would have been scarcely human if she had not secretly rejoiced in the discomfiture of her enemies. On their part, they were fully aware of the crushing defeat they had sustained; Rhoda's face had flushed a dark-red, and her lips were tightly compressed; Maud was actually shedding tears of mortification; and Miss Daughton was, perhaps, privately enjoying the whole scene. Maud had inflicted too many stabs on her governess to receive any sympathy from that quarter.



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"Yes ; she was knocked up by yesterday's journey, poor darling."

said Miss Daughton, smiling. "Your cousin evidently doesn't wish to distinguish herself in that way."

"I suppose she feels that she has done enough to annoy us just for the present," cried Maud. "She has managed to make strife in the household."

"You shouldn't have attacked her so savagely," said Rhoda. "My father would not have spoken if you had said less. You always go too far."

"I think the doctor's family pride was touched," the governess remarked. "We must remember that, after all, Daisy is his own brother's child ; and the Garnetts have reason to be proud of their descent."

"But her mother was a nobody ; a horrid, low farmer's daughter !" Maud said furiously.

"She became the wife of a gentleman, dear Maud, and shared his name and social standing. And it appears that she was connected with—"

"The people who lived in the hall ! O

you believe that romantic story, do you? I did not fancy you were quite so credulous."

"Really," said Rhoda, demurely, "I think that aunt of Daisy's must have invented the tale. No doubt she gave the drawing to Daisy, and told her to relate the history when an opportunity came. Mamma used to say that people of low origin often did that sort of thing."

"Of course," sneered Maud, "it's their way. And it would be quite too nice for them if every one were like Miss Daughton, and overflowed with faith!"

The governess seemed as unmoved as usual by this impertinence; but she was silent, and soon quitted the room.

"The perfidious Daughton has gone over to the enemy," said Maud to her sister.

"You will make enemies right and left if you affront people so outrageously," replied Rhoda, with annoyance. "Miss Daughton is a gentlewoman, and she is very useful and agreeable in this house."



"Well, she is paid for being useful and agreeable."

"Other governesses were paid too, but they never answered our purpose as she does."

"Hundreds of ladies would be ready to jump into her situation, Rhoda, if she were to leave us."

"But my father would not like her to go. He says she is always well-bred and discreet, and never intrusive. And she does not do anything to provoke you."

"She doesn't care for me a bit," cried Maud.

"Do you expect her to care for you?" asked Rhoda, with more feeling than she generally showed. "I wonder sometimes, Maud, whether you ever realise the unnecessary pain you inflict upon people. Only the commonest courtesy is required of you, and yet you fling insults right and left."

"O, I don't think Miss Daughton is easily wounded! And, on the whole, I fancy she has as much affection for me as for you. I

know you do not insult people, Rhoda, but no one seems to care for you. You have no friends at all."

Rhoda's dark face flushed.

"It is true," she said, "that I have little power of winning affection ; but I don't make people hate me as you do."

"Gerty doesn't hate me," Maud said gaily, as Miss Sandon entered the room. "How are you now, darling ? Rested, I hope."

"Quite rested, thanks," Gertrude answered, with her brightest manner. "And quite ready, dear Maud, to go into the charade business."

"Oh, it is sure to be a success if you take it in hand !" said Maud rapturously. "To my great delight, the family incumbrance declines to have anything to do with acting ; so we shall have it all to ourselves. And you must choose your parts, my Gerty, and arrange everything."

"You think too highly of my powers, dearest," replied Miss Sandon, with her prettiest affectation of humility.

Rhoda looked on, silent and cynical ; and yet, although she had an instinctive disbelief in Gertrude, she almost envied Maud this semblance of a friend.

One who would have been a real friend was near at hand ; but Rhoda's heart was obstinately closed against her,

"We have engaged Miss Leeson to make some of the dresses," said Maud. "You said she was very clever, Gerty, didn't you?"

No one noticed that Gertrude's face underwent a sudden change at these words. She grew a shade or two paler, but answered with perfect self-possession.

"She can only work under direction, Maudie, her's isn't by any means an original mind. How did you manage to find out her address?"

"It was written on an envelope. I picked it up in your room after your last visit here. I thought you said she had a great deal of talent, Gerty."

"You might have found some one who would have answered your purpose better, dear Maud."

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"Well, it is too late now," said Maud, rather impatiently. "Our own maid is very stupid, and we have engaged her to come and work to-morrow. And I am sure you praised her immensely when you were here last."

"The costumes she made were perfectly lovely," cried Miss Daughton, entering at the moment.

"It is time to get ready for church," said Rhoda, unconsciously coming to Gertrude's relief.

"Are you going to church, Gerty?" Maud asked.

"Yes, dear; I think I will go," replied Gertrude, knowing that if she stayed at home, Maud would be her companion.

"But aren't you too tired, darling?"

"Oh no, I am quite well and strong this morning. There are the bells!" And she tripped away to her room to dress, feeling that anything just then, would be better than a tête-a-tête with her dearest friend.

"Man judgeth from the outward appear-

ance," and the external aspect of the ladies who came out of Doctor Garnett's house was calm and pleasant enough.

Church bells were ringing, a clear December sun was shining over Portland Place, and a thin coating of frost glistened on window-sills and iron railings. The day was fresh and bright, and church-goers, young and old, were taking their way along the broad pavement.

Rhoda and Maud were walking with their guest, little realizing the disgust of Gertrude at finding herself between two tall women. "They quite swallowed me up, dear," she wrote afterwards to another dearest friend. "There was not a morsel of me to be seen, and I might have been dressed in anything. It was quite too exasperating; I wore my black velvet paletôt trimmed with deep borders of otter, and a gown to match; and a little gipsy bonnet lined with palest blue. On my right marched Rhoda, as stiff and straight as Lot's wife after her transformation; on my left was Maud, with all her clothes badly put on, looking a handsome dowdy, as

she always does. Behind us came the governess, and that little orphan cousin, who is so hated by the Garnett girls. Between ourselves, this despised Daisy is not ill-looking, and is as Mignon-like as myself. She is fairly well dressed, although her wardrobe is scanty; and she really knows how to move, and how to speak. Still she is decidedly a nuisance; and her presence in the house is, for many reasons, most undesirable."

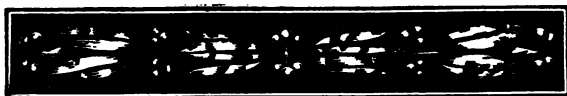
Daisy, walking quietly by Miss Daughton's side, was thinking very little about the trio in front of her. Her thoughts had drifted back to old Sundays, when she had gone to church with her schoolfellows in Bridleton.

The bell of All Souls was still keeping up its sonorous clang, when the doctor's family went to their pew in the middle aisle. Gertrude hated the bell, it made her head ache, she thought, as she bowed her face reverently over the book-board; but her head would have ached just as badly if she had stayed in her room.

Nobody guessed what a rugged path those daintily-shod feet were treading; none suspected that a restless heart was beating under the silk velvet. Not far from Gertrude sat a woman, still young, who had struggled with poverty for many a year, and was now thanking God that she could earn her own living, and pay her own way in the world. To that woman, in her plain woollen garments, the bell's loud voice was sweet music; it made an accompaniment to the psalm that she was singing in her soul. The great Father was so good to His poor child; He had given her back health and strength, so that she could work from morning till night. And then, too, He had given her this Day of Rest when she might come and join in the dear old prayers, and lift up her grateful spirit to Him.

"God is so good,"—ah me, it is the cry of those only whose earthly needs are few, and whose treasures are laid up for them in heaven!

"The secret this of rest below."



## CHAPTER X.

"THOU HAST NOR EAR, NOR SOUL."

IT was the week before Christmas, and what with preparations for Christmas day, and the charade-party that was to take place afterwards, the doctor's house was full of bustle and business.

As to Dr Garnett himself, he thought very little about the coming festivities, and was as fully engrossed as ever in his profession. He read, and thought, and studied deeply in his spare hours, and was engaged in writing a medical work which, men said, was destined to be one of the most valuable books of the day.

Daisy cherished a most profound reverence for her uncle's great abilities, and was secretly prouder of his fame than his own children



had ever been. They simply accepted the fact of his greatness, while Daisy gloried in it.

Preoccupied though he was, it did occasionally occur to Dr Garnett that his brother's child was a being of a higher order than his own daughters. Rhoda, although she did not lack good qualities, was unattractive, and her perceptions were not keen. Maud's nature was coarse, and her intellectual capacities were small; between her and her father there never had been, and never could be any sympathy.

When Daisy and Mr Alderstone had talked together, the doctor had seen his niece in a new light. He saw that she possessed the power of interesting and attracting a clever man, who had been simply wearied by Miss Sandon's gay chatter. Her fresh simplicity alone was pleasant to one who was tired of falsities; but it was her bright intelligence that had made Mr Alderstone exert himself to please her, and stay so long by her side.

Dr Garnett smiled his rare smile when he found, on the breakfast table, a neat packet

addressed to Daisy. Mr Alderstone had fulfilled his promise and sent his book ; and the doctor was secretly diverted while that parcel was opened. He was sufficiently amused even to spend a moment in watching the faces of his daughters and Gertrude.

Maud made a grimace, to which her dear friend responded by a little *moue* which did not disarrange her features. And Rhoda sighed.

It was not simply a sigh of envy, although the doctor, perhaps, thought it was. Rhoda was beginning to realize the bareness and grimness of her life, and to wish that people would like her.

But what effort had she ever made to turn acquaintances into friends? Many had approached her in the hope of finding something agreeable and lovable, and had gone away unsatisfied. We do not seek pleasant fruits on boughs that have never borne any ; and Rhoda's boughs had never even put forth a blossom. She had just let her life-tree alone, and it was a barren tree indeed.

Daisy took possession of her gift very quietly. The faintest flush of pleasure dawned in her cheeks ; but she said nothing, and scarcely opened the little volume. No one made a remark about the matter, and breakfast, that morning, was an unusually silent meal.

Rhoda had suggested that the school-room should be used as a work-room by the dress-maker ; books were put out of the way, and the table was soon covered with stuffs and ribbons of all descriptions. At the end of the apartment was a little room, hardly larger than a closet, lighted by a narrow slit of a window, and furnished with a small table and a chair. In this tiny room, Daisy had received permission to keep her drawing materials, and it was daily used by her as a sort of studio.

On her way to this sanctum after breakfast, she passed the dressmaker, already seated at her work. Daisy wished her a kindly good morning, and was struck by her pale and sorrowful face.

She would, perhaps, have said a few words to the young woman in the hope of winning her confidence; but Maud's step was heard outside the door, and she hastened to shut herself into her closet.

As she bent over her pencil she could hear distinctly the loud voice of Maud laying down the law in her usual fashion, and the submissive tone of Miss Leeson's replies. There was intense sadness in that tone; it seemed to tell Daisy of a spirit crushed by the long pressure of heavy burdens; and she could scarcely bear to listen to it.

The short December day was drawing to a close; but there was no quiet to be had in the house. The running up and down stairs, the opening and shutting of doors, and the ringing of bells, went on with hardly any cessation. Maud, full of gaiety and excitement, added not a little to the general state of bustle.

"Your brain isn't so fertile as usual, Gerty," she said banteringly to her friend. "You have no suggestions to make about the costumes."

"I am feeling rather stupid to-day," admitted Miss Sandon.

"How funny you are sometimes, Gerty!" Maud continued. "When we were in the work-room, just now, you gave Miss Leeson such an odd look, that you quite startled me."

"You are really getting quite too imaginative, dearest Maudie," drawled Gertrude.

"Nonsense; nobody ever accuses me of imagination," cried Maud, laughing. "Miss Leeson was going to speak to you, and you opened your big eyes and gave her such a flash that she looked frightened. Is there any terrible secret between you and the dress-maker?"

Gertrude shrugged her shoulders.

"You must have been reading sensation novels, very hard, lately," she said. "I wouldn't be bored with a secret for the world."

The foregoing conversation took place in the drawing-room, but no one overheard it save Daisy.

Afternoon tea was going on ; Rhoda and Miss Daughton were talking to two elderly ladies who had dropped in, and Maud and Gertrude were seated on a couch near the fire. Daisy's eyes and ears were quick, and she was so near the pair that her observations were made with ease.

She fancied that Gertrude's manner was more constrained than usual. Although she drawled very much, and lounged languidly on the cushions, there was a touch of acting in her whole behaviour. The drawl and the languor were a trifle overdone.

"I believe you have lots of secrets, you mysterious little darling!" declared Maud. "I shall find them all out one day."

Daisy did not linger to hear more. The chatter that Maud habitually indulged in was not interesting, and Mr Alderstone's book was only half read. So anxious was Daisy to be alone, that she emptied her cup in haste, and stole unnoticed out of the drawing-room.

The school-room was empty. Gas and fire were burning brightly; the sewing-

machine was surrounded with a many-coloured litter of gay calicot; but Miss Leeson was not there.

Daisy's sanctum contained a tiny grate in which an atom of fire was burning. Quite contented, she closed the door, lighted a solitary candle, and sat down to enjoy her book in peace.

Presently the loud whir of the sewing-machine told her that the dressmaker had returned to her post. She read on, although the sound a little distracted her attention from the pages; there was an hour and a half of delightful solitude before dinner-time, and no one ever intruded into her nook.

By-and-bye the noise of the machine ceased, and there was a sound of talking in the next room. Daisy recognised Gertrude Sandon's voice at once, but she was not speaking in her usual manner. Her words came out sharply and hurriedly, as if anger and fear, too, were prompting her to speech.

"You were going to say something when I came into the room with Miss Garnett. How dared you?" said Gertrude.

"I did not mean to offend you, Miss Sandon." The dressmaker's tone was sad but clear. "You don't know how badly I want the money you owe me. I have waited and waited in the hope that you would remember me; I did not even know your address."

"I have had no settled home lately," Gertrude answered with impatience. "I should have paid you if I could; you might have known that."

"Let me have part of the money, Miss Sandon; pray do. The amount is fifteen pounds. I had to pay for all the materials out of my own purse; satin, and fringe, and silk velvet. Oh, Miss Sandon, I was *obliged* to pay! Let me have five pounds, just five."

The girl did not raise her voice to a scream, as some excited woman would have done. But her intense earnestness lent a force to the low tones, and made them distinctly heard.

Daisy was sitting by her fire, with the book lying unheeded on her knee. With all



her heart she was listening to the speakers; she could not help it; she had no power, just then, to rise and let them know that she was near.

"Impossible," replied Gertrude. "I am sorry; I am, indeed. But you don't realise my difficulties."

"Difficulties! When I rise to-morrow, Miss Sandon, I shall have nothing to eat; but I care little about myself. It is for my mother's sake that I want money. She is ill; she cannot eat coarse food, and we have been brought so low—so very low. I have been ill, too."

"I can't help it," said Gertrude, desperately. "I am very sorry, of course. But I am so worried and perplexed, myself, that I don't know what to do."

"You will let me have a little; just a little?"

"I cannot; it is quite impossible. When you have finished your work here you will be paid."

"Yes; but they will not pay me till I

have quite finished. And I am so weak, Miss Sandon, that I may be compelled to give up. Then what will become of my mother? Fifteen pounds, and you have never paid me a shilling! It is cruel—heartless."

"Don't make a scene," said Gertrude in a harder voice. "You will do no good to yourself; be quiet now. I must go; I shall be missed."

"But, oh, Miss Sandon—"

"Be quiet, I say. If you don't want to make an enemy, be silent."

The threat had its effect. In the next moment Daisy heard the school-room door opened and shut, and knew that Gertrude was gone.

For a few seconds there was utter silence; and then came the sound of a long, low moan, as of one in terrible bodily pain. Quick as thought Daisy sprang up from her seat, and opened the door of her closet.

The dressmaker had sunk into an arm-chair, and was leaning back with closed eyes, and lips so white that Daisy almost feared

that life had fled. She drew near the young woman, and laid a soft little hand on hers.

"I am afraid you are ill, Miss Leeson," said her gentle voice.

Miss Lesson's eyes unclosed, and she looked up, half bewildered, into Daisy's face.

"I was a little faint," she answered, feebly. "Don't trouble about me, please, madam."

"Just be still a moment," Daisy said, with infinite tenderness. "I will go to my room, and get some Eau-de-Cologne."

"Oh, madam, you are too good ; but—"

"Hush," Daisy entreated. "Leave everything to me. They have gone to dress for dinner, and you will not be disturbed."

Something in that soft, yet decided manner, inspired the poor girl with confidence. The colour began to steal slowly back into her lips, and she drew a long breath.

As Daisy surmised, all the ladies of the household had repaired to their rooms, and she encountered no one on her way to her chamber.

It was the work of a few moments to unlock

a little desk, and take out one golden sovereign. Sovereigns were not too plentiful with Daisy, but she did not pause to ask herself whether ten shillings would not do as well? Nor did she even stop to think it hard that she should be relieving one whom Gertrude Sandon had helped to make poor. Her mind was fixed upon immediate relief, and nothing else.<sup>1</sup>

When she returned to the school-room the dressmaker was trying to set about her work again. Daisy poured some Eau de Cologne on a handkerchief, and insisted that Miss Leeson should hold it to her face, and get refreshed.

"I have only a little while before dinner," said Daisy, speaking quickly; "but I must tell you that I overheard all that passed between you and Miss Sandon. Take this money now, and get what is necessary for your mother and yourself."

"You are too kind," Miss Leeson sobbed. "We have suffered terribly; I wish I could tell you —"

"Another time," Daisy answered. "You

will be here to-morrow. My cousins have engaged you for several days?"

"Yes; there is a great deal to be done. I can never thank you enough, madam. May I ask your name?"

"I am Daisy Garnett, the doctor's niece," replied Daisy simply. "And now I must run away to dress; so good night, and God bless you."

Aunt Cecily would have said that day that Michaelmas Daisy was worthy of her name. She had cheered and lifted a weary heart in its distress; and her parting blessing seemed to Anne Leeson like an answered prayer.

At dinner, Gertrude Sandon looked as radiant as usual; Daisy thought that her cheeks and eyes were even brighter than ever, and she appeared to have an unceasing flow of spirits. When they returned to the drawing-room, however, her liveliness seemed to flag; she shivered a little, crept into a seat near the fire, and was evidently anxious to be left alone.

"Darling, you have caught cold," said Maud.

"No, no," Gertrude answered; "I'm only tired. Do go and sing a duet with Rhoda, dearest. I am longing for music."

Maud flew to the piano, Rhoda rose, and Miss Daughton instantly offered to play the accompaniment. When all three were thoroughly occupied, Gertrude allowed herself to be natural once more.

She quite forgot Daisy's presence; her head sank wearily on the sofa cushion, and all the sparkle died out of her face. At that moment a stranger might have taken her for a woman of thirty instead of a girl of nineteen.

"Please read this, Miss Sandon," whispered Daisy, stealing to her side, and slipping a little note into the listless hand.

Gertrude started, and flashed a haughty look at the speaker. But Daisy went back to her seat without another word.

The duet was fortunately a lengthy affair; and after a furtive glance towards the piano, Miss Sandon unfolded and read the note. It was written in a firm hand, and ran thus:—

"I was an involuntary listener while you

were talking to Miss Leeson this afternoon. Forgive me if I seem rude and meddlesome; but pray tell me when and where I may speak to you."

Miss Sandon reflected for a second or two, and Daisy saw her tiny foot beating an angry tattoo upon the carpet. Then, feeling that there was no time to be lost, she produced a gold pencil and scribbled a reply.

A little crumpled ball of paper fell at Daisy's feet. She picked it up hastily, and managed to decipher these words :—

"To-night in my room at half-past ten."





## CHAPTER XI.

“WHAT KNOWEST THOU OF THE WORLD?”

“A THOUSAND thanks,” said Gertrude, when the duet was finished. “It was quite too lovely; dear Maudie has a perfect voice. Do you know I fear I must confess to a little bit of a cold?”

“What can I do for you, my Gerty?” cried Maud, rushing to her side.

“Nothing, love. I will go to my room at once, and I am sure I shall be quite well to-morrow. Sleep always cures my little ailments.”

“But you must have something hot, Gerty.”

Gertrude had taken a fair share of wine at dinner, but she was easily persuaded to drink a glass of negus. It was half-past nine when



she left the drawing-room, and Maud fussily insisted upon accompanying her upstairs.

"Miss Sandon is a very fragile creature," remarked Miss Daughton to Rhoda.

"She has no strength, it seems," Rhoda answered. "Her mother is a confirmed invalid; Captain Sandon died suddenly in India, and his widow never recovered from the shock. I daresay home is a melancholy place to Gertrude."

"She lives in the country, does she not?"

"Yes; General Wade's house is in Blankshire. He is not a rich man, and they entertain very little. But Gertrude is always visiting friends."

Daisy lingered till the hands of the time-piece pointed to five minutes to ten, and then went her way upstairs. It was a cold night; a glance through the landing window showed her a bit of dark sky studded with frosty stars; and she thought pitifully of houseless wanderers, and all to whom home comforts were denied.

There was no murmur of voices to be

heard as she passed Gertrude's door. Miss Sandon had cleverly contrived to get rid of her officious friend ; and it must be confessed that Maud's friendship was a severe strain upon the patience. Maud attached herself so violently and tenaciously to any one she chanced to like, that she was apt to become a kind of Old Man of the Sea ; and those who knew her well would rather have had her enmity than such troublesome devotion.

Daisy went to her room to wait quietly till the appointed time arrived. It was chilly there, after the warm atmosphere downstairs, and she hastened to wrap herself in the dark-blue flannel dressing-gown which had been one of Aunt Cecily's parting gifts. Quickly, too, she unbound and brushed the soft, thick tresses that had been neatly braided, and twisted them up for the night.

She sat down quietly to think upon the task that lay before her. Young and inexperienced in the world's ways, she felt that she was going to venture upon an unconventional step ;—a step that some would have blamed her for taking at all.

Miss Sandon would have a right, perhaps, to ask why she interfered in the matter? Worldly wisdom would have said that as she had overheard a conversation never intended for her ears, she should have let the whole business alone; and in nine cases out of ten, worldly wisdom would have been right.

But Daisy remembered that Gertrude was only a girl, not three years older than herself. Had Miss Sandon been a person of more advanced years, the venture would never have been made. And Miss Leeson—the poor weakly dressmaker—was merely a girl too.

She rose from her seat, and looked at the watch upon the toilet-table; it had been her mother's watch, and was treasured by Daisy as a sacred relic of an unknown love. The hands were pointing to the half-hour.

Very softly she unclosed the door, and made her way along the corridor that separated Miss Sandon's room from her own. Downstairs she could hear noises that indicated that the busy servants had not yet gone to rest; but all around was still.

She knocked gently at Miss Sandon's door, and was answered by a low-voiced "come in."

Gertrude was sitting in an arm-chair by the bright fire, and the light fell upon her frail little figure, wrapped in a rich *peignoir* of quilted crimson satin. She pointed to a seat on the other side of the hearth, and Daisy sat down in silence.

"I don't understand why you should meddle in my affairs, Miss Garnett," Gertrude began, speaking haughtily, but in a subdued tone.

Unconsciously, the girls made a picture as they sat fronting each other in the warm glow. The light of a wax-taper, placed on the mantelpiece, shone on Gertrude's fuzzy head, and Daisy's smooth hair; and the dark-blue wrapper of the one served as a foil to the glistening satin of the other. Daisy's clearly-cut face was perfectly composed and pale; while Gertrude's eyes flashed, and her cheeks were flushed with a feverish red.

"I beg pardon," Daisy answered gently. "It must seem mean in me to have listened."

"I thought there were only honourable people in this house," said Gertrude, with bitterness. "It never occurred to me to open the closet-door to hunt for eaves-droppers."

"I have done you no harm, Miss Sandon," replied Daisy, still very gently. "I ought, I believe, to have sprung up and opened the door when you began to talk. But the conversation occupied only a few minutes, and before I could think of what I was doing it was all over. Afterwards—"

"Afterwards, I suppose, you extracted further information from my dressmaker!"

"No. I heard her moan, and ran into the workroom. She is very weak, Miss Sandon, and she had nearly fainted."

There was a brief pause. Gertrude rested her burning cheek upon her hand, and looked fixedly into the fire.

"What do you come to me for?" she asked abruptly. "As you listened to it all, you heard me say that I am unable to help her. I am sorry, very sorry, of course; I

told her so. But I can do nothing. Why did you come to me?"

"To ask you to reconsider the case," answered Daisy. "I think—forgive me, Miss Sandon—that you hardly realise the poor girl's condition."

"I don't want to realise anybody's condition," said Gertrude, irritably. "My own is bad enough, I assure you. I daresay her troubles are no worse than mine!"

Daisy glanced at the costly *peignoir*, and thought of Miss Leeson's shabby dress and thin jacket.

"At any rate you have sufficient food and raiment," she remarked.

"You know nothing about my needs," returned Gertrude, loftily. "Yours has been a simple, bread-and-butter sort of life, shut out from the world."

"That is quite true," Daisy meekly owned. "But oh, let us speak of that poor girl! Forgive me, but if you leave her in her distress, don't you think that there will come a time when others will go their way and pass

you by? Do you remember the words,—  
‘With the same measure that ye mete withal,  
it shall be measured to you again?’”

“You talk to me as if I were a heathen,”  
said Gertrude, moving uneasily in her seat.  
“And, really, I don’t know why I must expect  
to be severely dealt with for a very common  
sin. It is all quite too hard and perplex-  
ing!”

There was a brief silence, and then the  
great hazel eyes began to fill with tears.  
Gertrude spoke again, but in a gentler and  
humbler tone.

“You can’t comprehend my difficulties. I  
never had a guide, and I plunged into society  
without any one to warn or restrain me. I  
need not tell you the end I have in view;  
you are young, but you can guess it easily  
enough. Well, a girl is thought nothing of  
now-a-days unless she out-dresses everybody  
else, and is always in the front rank. By  
 dint of striving and pushing I got into the  
front rank; but one has to pay heavily to  
keep a footing there.”

She looked up to meet Daisy's glance of sympathy.

"You see, I didn't mean to run into debt when I began. My father hated that sort of thing;—poor dear father, I wonder what he would think of me? But it was a struggle, always a struggle; bills seemed somehow to run up of themselves; and my habits grew more and more extravagant. And I am a delicate girl; mine is only a fragile life,—I don't know how to exist without luxuries now."

"If it were in my power I would set you free from all your worries," said Daisy, earnestly. "I am like the ignorant little novice who talked to Queen Guinevere at Almesbury;—how can I know anything of your world? But—don't you think if you were to make just one little sacrifice, you would be all the happier for it?"

"I might not feel quite so wicked, perhaps, if I did," murmured Gertrude, musingly.

Again there was a pause. The fire was burning lower, and the blaze had subsided



into a red glow. It was nearly eleven o'clock, and Daisy rose reluctantly to depart.

"Stop," said Gertrude, rising too. "I can spare no money to give to Miss Leeson, but I may part with some of my trinkets. I have a curious old watch and chain in my dressing-case ; they are of value, I know."

Daisy's face brightened as she watched Gertrude's little fingers turning over a heap of jewellery. The watch and chain were produced ; both were massive, and of ancient make, and studded with small pearls and rubies.

"Take them into your keeping lest I should change my mind," Gertrude said, as she handed the trinkets to Daisy. "And take my advice,—be always a Daisy, simple, and modest, and lowly. It answers better to be a field-flower than a hothouse plant. I cannot live out in the open field now ; it is too late. But I wish I could."

"God looks after all His flowers, no matter where they grow," answered Daisy.

"It may be that He does. I need looking

after badly enough. I shall not stay any longer in this house ; to-morrow I will go away."

"But why will you go?" Daisy asked.

"Because the place and people don't suit me. There is nothing to be gained by remaining, and I am sick to death of Maud. So I shall receive a mysterious summons and depart."

"And Miss Leeson?"

"I will speak to her before I go, and tell her that I leave something in your hands. Good night, Daisy. Remember that we must meet on formal terms again to-morrow."

The great, bright eyes gazed wistfully into Daisy's face. Both girls looked at each other in silence for a moment; then they kissed, and parted.

Daisy went back to her room with noiseless feet; locked up the watch and chain, and slept soundly through the rest of the night. It was later than usual when she woke; and all the family, save Gertrude, were seated at the breakfast table when she went down stairs.

Maud was in tears. Daisy was not left long in ignorance of the cause of her grief; she could not keep it to herself.

"Horrid people always stay on for ever, and nice ones leave us," she wailed. "It is quite too cruel that darling Gerty should have to go."

"Must she really go?" Rhoda asked.

"There is no help for it. She says her summons is most imperative. She is so awfully sorry to miss the charade-party."

"I suppose her mother is ill?" said Miss Daughton.

"O yes; her mother is always getting ill. Won't it be wretched for that poor sweet Gerty to spend her Christmas at the Limes? The old general and his sister are eternally in the blues; and they have no nice neighbours."

"Perhaps she will come back to us by-and-bye," suggested Rhoda.

"There is no hope of that. She has to pay a long-promised visit to the Rayfords, at Brighton. She doesn't care about them a

bit, I am sure ; but Gerty is *so* unselfish, and Ada Rayford is *so* absurdly fond of her."

"The Rayfords ;—oh, they go a great deal into society. I have heard of them," said Miss Daughton. "And Brighton is delightful in winter. Let me see ; Miss Sandon's home is in Sussex, is it not ?"

"Yes ; the general lives in a horrid little village about twenty miles from Brighton," Maud replied. "But Gerty cannot endure the sea ; a watering-place hasn't many attractions for her."

Miss Daughton said no more ; but Daisy detected a quiet smile on her face, and guessed that she saw through Gertrude's little manœuvres.

Daisy did not see Miss Sandon again till she was dressed for her journey. She looked a dainty little creature, enveloped in furs, "like a Russian princess," as Maud said. All her woman-of-the-world manner had returned, but it was sufficiently tempered with soft regret to suit the occasion.

"Pray come to us again, Gertrude," said

Rhoda, really sorry to part with a guest who had enlivened the house and kept her sister in good temper.

"Indeed I will ; you have been so *very* kind," responded Gertrude, with pleasant warmth.

"Good-bye, sweetest ; your stay has been the greatest delight," sobbed Maud. "Write soon ; let me have a long, long letter ; I shall be utterly miserable when you are gone."

"I hate partings," murmured Gertrude, plaintively, as her little person was enveloped in Maud's embrace. Miss Daughton smiled her furtive smile again, and Daisy felt perfectly certain that Gertrude had spoken the truth !

"Good-bye, dear Miss Daughton ; Miss Garnett, good-bye."

Gertrude gave Daisy's hand an expressive squeeze, submitted patiently to one more hug from Maud, and then tripped down the steps to the carriage. It rolled away ; the hall door was shut ; and Maud gave vent to a loud burst of hysterical weeping.

As hysterics occupied the younger Miss Garnett for sometime, Daisy seized an opportunity to slip into the school-room, and talk to Miss Leeson.

She found the poor dressmaker much soothed and comforted ; her mother was better, and had enjoyed the beef-tea which had been procured through Daisy's timely gift. The watch and chain were most gratefully received, and Miss Leeson said she should intrust them to the clergyman who visited her.

"He will, perhaps, dispose of these things for me," she added. "He will know their value better than I do. My mother has told him a great deal about our troubles, and he has been very kind. If we could only get quite well and strong, I should not be uneasy about our future."

"Do you find full employment?" Daisy asked.

"Yes, madam. Before my mother was ill, she used to work too ; and as we have a sewing-machine, we made a great many costumes at home. She began to be ill just

after I had undertaken Miss Sandon's dresses. Somehow all our trials seemed to come at once ; what with nursing mother and neglecting myself I lost my own health."

" You need rest and change of air," suggested Daisy.

" Indeed we do," the girl answered sadly. " We are country-bred, mother and I ; and London does not suit us at all. Before my father's death we lived in a pleasant country town ; he had a situation in a warehouse, and my mother made dresses for the ladies in the place. His death was very sudden ; and then mother was persuaded to come to London, and live with her sister."

" Have you lived long in town ? " inquired Daisy.

" Just three years. My aunt died a twelve-month after we came ; and we stayed on, hoping to prosper. But mother will never be well in a close street, I am afraid ; our lodging is in Marylebone ; it is a crowded neighbourhood."

"I wish I could go to see your mother," said Daisy.

"Oh, no, dear Miss Garnett; they wouldn't let you. And you have done us a world of good already," replied the dressmaker gratefully.

But Daisy wanted to do more good still.

Maud continued to wander from room to room in an inconsolable state, sometimes taking a spasmodic interest in the charade costumes, and sometimes declaring that she hated the thought of the party now that her darling Gertrude was gone. Rhoda, really fatigued with the burden of household arrangements, kept as much as possible out of her sister's way.

Miss Daughton would willingly have shared the weight of Rhoda's domestic cares, but Miss Garnett was not a little proud of her capacities for managing a large house, and declined all assistance. Yet the responsibility was heavy for young shoulders; and Maud's querulous complaints and varying temper did not make it lighter.



At four o'clock in the afternoon, Daisy came suddenly upon Rhoda, sitting alone in the breakfast-room. The fire was burning low, and the room was filled with the grey mist of twilight; but Daisy could see weariness in her cousin's attitude, and felt sorry for her.

"You are tired, Rhoda," she said gently. "I wish I could do something to help you."

"You can do nothing, thank you," was Rhoda's reply.

"I could never be such a clever manager as you are," Daisy went on, "but if in some little way I could be of service I should be glad."

"I really don't need any help as a rule," said Rhoda, more graciously. "And there is Miss Daughton always at hand if aid is required. But I shall be glad to get back to my crewel-work."

"You have not done any for days."

"No; I have been too busy with other things. I wanted to finish my sunflowers before Christmas Day; but it can't be done."

"Rhoda, let me finish them," Daisy said eagerly.

"Oh no, thank you. You would not take any interest in the work. The cushion is intended for an old friend of my mother's; a lady you have never seen."

"Indeed, Rhoda, I should be greatly interested. It would be so pleasant to feel I was serving you."

If there had been more light in the room it is doubtful whether Daisy would have spoken so freely. But the twilight, and Rhoda's evident weariness gave her courage. Moreover, Miss Daughton was not clever at crewel-work, and her assistance in this case could not be relied upon.

"I don't know why it should be pleasant," Rhoda said, with a half-suppressed sigh. "People are not generally so very anxious to serve each other."

"I think they would be anxious to help, if they had once tasted the pleasure of helpfulness," answered Daisy.

There was a little pause, and then Rhoda sighed again.

“If you really wish to finish the sunflowers, you can undertake them,” she said awkwardly. And Daisy thanked her as if she had conferred a favour.





## CHAPTER XII.

“FALSER THAN ALL SONGS HAVE SUNG.”

DAISY set to work upon the sunflowers with hearty zeal, and the work drew Rhoda and her cousin an inch or two nearer together.

They had one taste in common—the love of art needlework; and Rhoda soon saw that Daisy's skill excelled hers, and could not help feeling that her aid was really valuable. While she was moving about the house, inspecting guest chambers and giving directions, it was pleasant to know that her beloved sunflowers were growing into beauty under an artistic hand.

Three guests arrived on Christmas Eve. Two were elderly ladies,—old family friends,—and the third was a venerable physician who had been intimate with Dr Garnett in the very outset of his career. Christmas

Day dawned clear and sunshiny ; the party were assembled at the breakfast-table, and plenty of cheerful chat was going on while Rhoda filled the cups. Maud's seat alone was vacant.

"Does not Maud breakfast with us on Christmas morning?" demanded Dr Garnett at last.

"Yes, papa ; she will come down presently," replied Rhoda, with an uneasy glance at Miss Daughton. It was not often that Maud thus braved her father's displeasure when there were guests in the house ; and Rhoda dreaded a scene.

"She was unusually tired last night," said Miss Daughton in a pleasant tone of apology. "The charade costumes quite absorbed her ; there was so much to be done at the last. If you will excuse me, Rhoda, I will go up to her room."

"I shall be glad if you will go," Rhoda answered. "I think she cannot be well."

Miss Daughton rose and went her way upstairs. The door of Maud's chamber was

closed, and the governess knocked sharply. A kind of howl was the only reply.

"Maud, what is the matter?" cried the governess.

There was another howl; and then, finding the door unlocked, Miss Daughton entered without ceremony.

Although the room was well furnished with chairs, Maud was seated in the middle of the floor. She was in her dressing-gown, her hair was down, hanging loose over her shoulders, and her face was inflamed with passion.

"What is the matter?" Miss Daughton repeated.

"She is a traitress; a nasty, sly, deceitful little sneak of a traitress;" screamed Maud, picking up a letter, and flinging it at the governess. "Read that!"

But Miss Daughton did not immediately read the letter. She spent a few minutes in soothing her pupil, and entreating her to be calm and reasonable. And then she drew such a terrible picture of Dr Garnett's anger

that Maud was really frightened, and began to try to compose herself.

Rhoda, from the head of the table, directed an inquiring look at the governess as she resumed her seat.

"Dear Maud is rather feverish this morning," said Miss Daughton. "She has a violent headache; I have advised her to be as still as possible for an hour or two."

"Is she subject to headaches?" asked Mrs Jackson, one of the guests.

"No," said Rhoda. "She generally has good health. But she has been tired and over-excited. A young friend of hers, who came to spend Christmas here, was very suddenly summoned away; and Maud took her departure to heart."

"A sudden leave-taking always unsettles everybody," remarked Mrs Allen, the other lady-guest. And then she went on to tell the story of a telegram which had gone to the wrong house, and caused no end of consternation and confusion.

When breakfast was over Miss Daughton

and Rhoda contrived to snatch a few minutes alone together. The governess drew the letter from her pocket, and began to read its contents aloud.

"I don't understand it," said Rhoda, glancing at the opening words. "Why does Gertrude begin, 'my dearest Ada,' when she is writing to Maud?"

"For once in her life Miss Sandon has made a blunder," replied Miss Daughton, laughing. "It is all clear enough to me. This letter is written to Ada Rayford, and Gertrude has enclosed it in the envelope addressed to Maud."

"Read on," said Rhoda, half amused, and half angry.

"My dearest Ada"—(the letter ran)—  
Here I am in my uncle's dreary old house again, but dismal as it is, it seems a paradise after the place I have just left. I was invited, as you know, to spend Christmas with the Garnetts in Portland Place; but I found them altogether quite too intolerable, and invented an arbitrary summons to the Limes.



“Have you ever known the misery of possessing a devoted friend who will never let you alone? Do you know what it is to be haunted by a creature who stifles you with unwelcome caresses, and never permits you to enjoy a moment’s solitude? If you have ever suffered from this diseased form of friendship, you will realize all that I endured from Maud Garnett;—the big, dark, handsome girl you saw at Southsea.

“Maud has a certain kind of beauty which might be made very effective if she dressed and moved well. But she always looks as if she had been at sea in a stiff gale, and had just emerged from her cabin. She cannot sit down in a satin gown without covering it with little creases that never come out; and if she wears velvet it invariably gets the pile rubbed off. It was positively a trial to look at her.

“Her temper is so violent that everybody in the house submits to her for the sake of peace. There is something savage even in her affection; her embraces nearly crushed a poor little butterfly like myself; and I shall

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never forget the relief I experienced when I was released from her last tremendous hug, and turned my back upon the house. You will think me terribly severe, dear Ada; but, seriously, I have tried to find one redeeming point in Maud Garnett's character, and have failed. She made me so exceedingly nervous and uncomfortable, that perhaps I can hardly be just; yet I don't think I have given you an incorrect sketch of her.

"I will not bore you by describing the other members of the family. The great doctor is far too great to make himself agreeable in his home; and as for Rhoda and the governess they seem to live in constant terror of Maud. There is a pretty little orphan cousin in the house who is generally snubbed; but in my opinion she is decidedly the best of the Garnetts.

"I shall come to you (oh, so gladly!) when Christmas is over. I suppose Brighton is full of fashion and beauty; and I fear I shall seem quite too dowdy among all the brilliant belles. But the pleasure of your companion-

ship will make me forget anything that is unpleasant ; and I shall try to show that I am really grateful for all your love to poor little me.

“ *Au revoir*, dearest ; with kisses for yourself, and kindest regards to your dear people, Believe me, ever thine, GERTRUDE.”

“ Maud has never had such a blow in her life,” said Rhoda, unable to refrain from laughter. “ So this is her dear Gerty ; the bosom friend, of whose love she felt so perfectly sure. I wonder whether she will ever try friendship again.”

“ I found her sitting on the floor, indulging in violent invectives against the darling Gertrude,” said Miss Daughton in great amusement. “ Certainly Miss Sandon is a false little thing, but—”

“ Maud has only got her deserts,” remarked Rhoda, moving away.

And perhaps Rhoda Garnett may be pardoned if she triumphed a little in this revelation of Gertrude’s true feelings towards Maud. Had not Maud taunted her sister

with her friendlessness? Better no friend at all than a false friend, said Rhoda to herself.

There was only one person who sympathised with Maud in her distress, and forbore to laugh at it; and that was Daisy.

There are souls so sensitive that they sympathise with every form of wounded affection, even if the affection be that of a coarse and selfish nature. They know that love is love, let its outward garb be ever so unlovely.

Daisy had essentially a sympathetic spirit,—the spirit of the truest and highest type of womanhood. And as the hours passed on, and she thought of Maud sitting alone with her misery upstairs, she longed intensely to go and give her comfort.

Miss Daughton had told Daisy the whole story of the misdirected letter; told it with unequivocal signs of mirth and satisfaction.

"I never saw so good a comedy in all my days," she said, laughing. But to Daisy there were tragic elements in the comedy, and she could not laugh with the governess.

Just as the gong had sounded for luncheon, Daisy encountered Dr Garnett in the hall. He had returned from his rounds, and was taking off his greatcoat as she passed him.

"What is the matter with Maud?" he asked. "Is she really sick? Or is it temper?"

"She has had a letter from Gertrude Sandon, which has made her very unhappy," Daisy replied.

"Bosh," he said, irritably. "I will not have her indulged in this absurd way. She shall come downstairs and sit at the table. Go and call her, Daisy; or send a servant."

"I will call her myself, Uncle Philip, if you desire it," said Daisy.

"I do desire it. Why do you look so serious?" he demanded with his satirical smile. "Surely you don't consider Maud's case calls for sympathy?"

"I sympathise with everything that suffers," answered Daisy, as she moved away.

She met Rhoda on the stairs, and told her of the doctor's command.

"Papa is quite right," Rhoda said firmly. "It is really ridiculous in Maud to sit up there and bewail herself. I am tired of making excuses to Mrs Allen and Mrs Jackson ; they don't believe that she is ill in the least."

"She is ill in mind, Rhoda," returned Daisy, gravely. "I am sure her love for Gertrude was a very real thing; and this shock is terrible."

Rhoda looked at her cousin in astonishment. There were tears in Daisy's eyes ; she was actually weeping for the girl who had insulted her, and tried to make her life unbearable. And as Rhoda stood on the stairs, and confronted Daisy's grieved face, she began to realise the existence of a spirit higher and purer than her own.

Perhaps it was just because she *could* weep for one who had injured her, that Daisy was a happy girl. It was this power of forgetting herself and her own wrongs, and feeling with another that almost startled Rhoda, so strange did it seem. It was the first revelation

that she had ever received of the spirit of Christ, and she stood amazed, and almost awed by the sweetness of it.

"Do you really think we ought to let Maud alone?" she asked, suddenly.

"Just for the present it would be best," Daisy replied.

"Then I will tell my father that she is not well enough to come down," said Rhoda, moving towards the dining-room. "I hardly think he will insist upon her appearance."

Dr Garnett did not insist; and Maud was permitted to remain in her self-chosen solitude.

She scarcely touched the luncheon that Jane brought her from the table downstairs; heart-sickness, a kind of ailment that was new to this girl, had deprived her of appetite, and the servant carried the dishes away again in some surprise.

"Miss Maud must be really ill," she thought. "This time it is something more than bad temper."

Yes; it was something more than temper;

it was the deep sorrow of a sorely-wounded spirit.

After the first reading of Gertrude's letter, Maud had indeed burst out into a storm of passion ; but her fury soon spent itself, and died away, leaving a dull, deep pain behind. She had called Gertrude hard names ; but the outburst had not relieved her in the least. And as she sat alone in her room, she felt that she would have given almost anything in the world to have been able to believe in her friend again.

She rose and opened her door a little way. There was no one moving about upstairs, and she stole into the corridor and went straight to the room that Gertrude had occupied.

There were several spare chambers in the doctor's great house, and Miss Sandon's room was left empty. Gertrude and her personal belongings were gone ; yet there were many things here that seemed to speak of her still.

There were the mirrors that had reflected



her bright face and fairy figure ; there was the easy chair in which she had sat while she talked by the fire with Maud. All the little winning ways and sparkling looks of her lost friend came back to Maud as she stood in that vacant room ; and she lifted up her voice and wept.

She was still very young, and this feeling for Gertrude had been the most real and intense that her life had ever known. Such treasures as her nature could give, she had lavished unreservedly on Gerty, believing that her affection was duly valued and returned. And now to find that her idol loathed its worshipper, and despised her offerings !

She was too miserable to care that her mortification was known to Miss Daughton and Rhoda. Gertrude's falseness was the only thought that filled her mind ; never, never again should she spend happy hours by her friend's side, and listen to the silvery voice that had charmed her ears. It was all over ; this first friendship of hers must be

buried ; but it never could be quite forgotten.  
A grave that is made early in life is often  
revisited in later years, even when the sense  
of loss is gone.





## CHAPTER XIII.

"TURN FORTUNE, TURN THY WHEEL, AND  
LOWER THE PROUD."

MAUD was still standing in Gertrude's empty room, absorbed in her own thoughts, when a hand was laid gently on her arm.

She turned round impatiently, thinking it was Miss Daughton who had broken in upon her solitude. But it was Daisy who stood by her side, with a wistful face.

"I have not come to tease you, Maud," she said, in a timid voice. "But Uncle Philip said somebody must tell you that you were expected to appear at dinner; and Rhoda sent me to you."

"I am not going to appear at dinner," replied Maud, sullenly. "Nobody wants me."

"But, Maud, your father will be angry if you do not come. And this is Christmas day."



'A HAND WAS LAID GENTLY ON HER ARM.'—*l'age* 180.



"Yes ; it is Christmas day," Maud repeated bitterly. "And people are all enjoying themselves, I suppose ! It is a miserable Christmas to me."

"I daresay it isn't a bright Christmas to some other people," Daisy said softly. "There are hundreds of sufferers in the world to-day. Sometimes it is more comforting to think of the Founder, than of the festival itself."

"I can't think of anything but my own wretchedness," said Maud. "And I wish you would go away."

"I am going. But, oh, Maud, don't make Uncle Philip vexed !"

Maud drew a long breath, and then a shiver crept over her frame. Daisy touched her hand ; it was as cold as ice.

"You must not stay here," she said, earnestly. "You are half frozen, Maud ; and why should you make yourself so uncomfortable ? You have been without a fire for hours."

It was true. Maud had not let the servants touch her room that day, and the

grate was full of last night's ashes. Daisy's words seemed to rouse her to a sense of discomfort, and she shivered again.

"Sit down in that easy chair," Daisy entreated. "There is fuel in this grate, and I can kindle it in an instant. Do be persuaded, Maud ; dress for dinner in this room, and I will bring you some tea."

"I don't care about anything," Maud answered, sinking into the chair.

Daisy found matches and set light to the fuel without a moment's delay. As the wood crackled and the flames curled up, a certain vague sense of comfort began to steal over Maud, and she warmed her hands, mechanically, at the blaze.

Ever watchful, Daisy brought a thick shawl from her own room, and threw it round her cousin's shoulders. And then, shutting the door, she hastened downstairs for tea, and soon returned with all that was required.

Maud was curiously submissive to this new influence. She suffered Daisy to bring a tiny table to her chair, and place the tray

upon it ; and she accepted tea and bread and butter in silence. It was now growing dark out of doors ; only the fire made a glow in the room until Daisy lighted the wax tapers on the toilet-table, and then came back to Maud's side.

"Did they tell you about the letter?" asked Maud, abruptly breaking the pause.

"Yes," Daisy answered.

"I daresay you think I am a fool to grieve over it?"

"No," said Daisy. "If I had been in your case I should have fretted quite as much."

"I can see plainly that Miss Daughton regards me as a sort of lunatic," remarked Maud in a bitter tone. "But she has never loved any one in all her life ; and she cannot in the least understand my feeling about Gerty."

"I can understand it," Daisy replied.

"And I can't quite hate Gerty yet," Maud went on. "At first I thought I did. But I have been recalling the day when I saw her for the first time, and we began to be in-



timate. It was last Christmas, only a year ago ; she came to us for a week in May, and seemed to love me so much. And then in August I saw a great deal of her at the sea-side."

"There is a fascination about her," said Daisy.

"Indeed there is. She was popular everywhere, and never left unnoticed. Just crossing a street, or passing strangers in a crowded room, she was remarked, although she was not beautiful. I suppose it is that influence of hers that still haunts me, and makes it so impossible to dislike her."

"Why should you try to dislike her?" Daisy asked. "It is true that she has not valued your affection. But you will be happier and calmer if you forgive her in your heart. The only way to be at rest is to forgive."

"I can never forget," said Maud.

"No ; the wound remains, although we pardon the hand that made it ; and perhaps the scar may never wholly pass away. Yet

I don't think we need be any the worse for such scars ; they teach us to sympathise with others who suffer."

Maud drank her tea in silence, and for a little while only the crackling of the fire was heard. At last, setting down her cup, she looked full into Daisy's face, and said bluntly—

"Are you not rather glad that Gerty has made me miserable?"

"No," rejoined Daisy, meeting her glance with perfect frankness.

"Miss Daughton is glad," said Maud ; "although she purrs over me and pretends to condole, I know she heartily enjoys the whole thing ; and even Rhoda thinks I am rightly served."

"They don't view the matter so seriously as you do," replied Daisy, "and they do not realize how unhappy it has made you. If they did, they would be sorry, I am sure."

Maud shook her head, and smiled bitterly.

"You are not of the world, worldly, Daisy," she said, "else you would know that no-

thing adds such a relish to life as a friend's misfortune."

"I hope I never may be of the world, Maud, if those are its ways. They are very hateful to me."

"Ah, you have been very piously brought up, I can see," Maud said, half scornfully.

But Daisy did not resent the sneer.

"Come, Maud," she pleaded, "you will set about dressing for dinner, won't you? Wear scarlet camellias and black velvet; nothing suits you better."

"What does it matter how I am dressed?" cried Maud, passionately. "Gerty used to pretend to admire me, but she thought me a guy in her heart!"

"But surely, Maud, we dress to please more than one person. And as to Gertrude, if she thought you a guy she would not find many who agreed with her."

Daisy had poured oil into her cousin's wounds, and from that moment Maud's spirit began to revive. She accepted the kind offices of this good little Samaritan, and

felt all the more grateful because Daisy had not thought it necessary to summon the servants.

Rhoda could hardly believe her own eyes when she saw the two girls enter the drawing-room, and noticed that, instead of being carelessly dressed, Maud was better attired than usual. That Christmas day ended more pleasantly than it had begun; and there was a growing conviction in the family that Daisy's modest services were by no means to be despised.

Next day, Daisy sought a private interview with Rhoda, and tried to interest her in Miss Leeson. Rhoda did not think that Daisy ought to have talked to the dress-maker, and drawn out the story of her troubles; but she was not unwilling to show a kindness. "I don't think papa will object to your going to see the Leesons if I send a servant with you," she said. "You may take Jane, and she shall carry a pudding and some other things."

So Daisy wended her way to Marylebone

with a light heart, and Jane carried the basket with hearty good-will. It was pleasant to wait upon a young lady who had always a kind word for the servants, and never gave unnecessary trouble. From the first day of her arrival in Portland Place, Daisy had stood high in the favour of Dr Garnett's domestics.

Hope and sunshine entered Mrs Leeson's room with that young face. The poor woman was suffering from depression of spirits, and the sad languor that comes of lack of strength. Daisy's quiet cheerfulness, and her readiness to listen to a tale of trouble did much good to Mrs Leeson. She sat in the little room, and discussed ways and means and future prospects with the widow, while Jane listened in silent wonder.

But Daisy had herself taken lessons in the school of sorrow, and had never forgotten the teaching she had received. She went away with her head full of Mrs Leeson's affairs, and longed to send the widow and her daughter back to their native place where they might begin, as it were, a fresh life.

When she returned to her uncle's house it was one o'clock in the afternoon, and his carriage was just entering the gate. As Daisy followed it, treading the gravelled drive that skirted the grass, her thoughts wandered back to the day of her arrival, and parting with Aunt Cecily.

The aspect of the place was scarcely more cheerful now than it had been at that time. Then a few ragged leaves had been clinging to the trees; but now their branches were quite bare. The house itself still presented that gloomy look which had chilled poor Daisy's heart when she had first beheld it; but now she glanced up at those grim walls, and smiled brightly to herself. She had made the best of her life, and it was beginning to be an endurable life after all.

She had learnt the old truth that "stone walls do not a prison make," any more than blue skies and green fields can make liberty.

And yet her smile was quickly followed by a sigh. How long it seemed since she had seen Aunt Cecily's beautiful face, and listened

to the voice that had been indeed a guiding voice to her !

We do not forget when we become resigned. Daisy had had grace given her to accept her lot, and bear her heart-loneliness without a murmur ; but she had not ceased to pine for the companionship of her dearest friend. If she had found some pleasant associate of her own age—some one to whom she could have spoken freely about Cecily, her life would have been far brighter than it was. But she knew, by instinct, that her uncle's household still cherished a deep-rooted prejudice against her mother's family, even although they had begun to be more tolerant of herself.

She had learnt to love in silence ; and that is a hard lesson for the young. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth would fain have spoken ; but prudence taught her to be still. Yet this enforced reserve was making Daisy older and graver than she ought to have been at her age. A girl's thoughts should be like a stream that ripples and

laughs in the open sun ; not like the hidden waters that make their way in darkness and quietness through caverns that are known to none.

Her visit to Mrs Leeson had brought Aunt Cecily vividly to her mind ; she had been trying to speak as Cecily would have spoken, and the widow's look and smile had told her that the words had been uttered in season.

" But, oh, I am only a faint echo of *her* ! " thought Daisy, as she sat in the drawing-room in the afternoon, while the rest were talking around her.

The charade party was to come off that night ; Maud had partly recovered her spirits, and was talking over the actors with Mrs Jackson. A young lady had been persuaded to take the part that Gertrude Sandon had chosen ; and the affair was expected confidently to be a success in spite of Gertrude's desertion. Daisy was beginning to wish it was all over ; she was getting tired of the endless discussions about costumes, and the



incessant pro and con which is always so wearisome to an uninterested listener. Even Rhoda was drawn into the general confab, and the flow of talk and afternoon tea went on without cessation.

It was a pleasure to Daisy to see the face of one whom she knew and liked. Mr Alderstone entered in the midst of the buzz of chit-chat, and soon found his way to her side.

"I have just returned from a long journey," he said, bringing his tea-cup to a little table near her sofa. "Don't you love the country in winter? I do; I like to see brown-and-white fields and glistening trees."

"I do not know much about the country," Daisy answered, regretfully. "My birth-place was a busy town."

"I am country-born; a thorough rustic," said Mr Alderstone. "My home is in Woodshire;—a quaint old farm-house, in which the parents and an unmarried sister are living still. We have had a happy old-fashioned Christmas."

"I wish I had a home," said Daisy involuntarily. Then seeing his grave, inquiring look, she added, "I mean that it would be good to have a father and mother, and brothers and sisters. I am an orphan; and the aunt who is my very dearest friend is far away."

"That is hard for you," he replied, gently. "But you are young, and will form new ties by-and-by; you have life before you, and hope in your heart. One of the saddest things I have ever seen is a lonely and loveless old age; and yesterday I slipped away from my own household group to visit one who is old and quite alone."

Daisy listened with an interested face.

"Picture to yourself," he continued, "a white-haired, sun-tanned man, sitting in solitude by his Christmas fire. The light flickers and dances over the panelled walls of his grand old room, and touches the rich carving of the oaken chimney-piece. In days gone by, a father and mother, three goodly sons, and a fair daughter kept many a merry

Christmas within those walls; but all are dead now. Early in life the youngest son went away to far lands, and he is now the last of his race. While he was absent his sister, the pet of his boyhood, left her home by stealth to marry a man unworthy of her; and her friends refused to see her face again. She died, after a second marriage, leaving children behind her; but what has become of those children is not known as yet. If they are living, and Mr Hurstone can find them—”

“Hurstone was my grandmother’s maiden name,—the name of my mother’s mother,” interrupted Daisy in a quivering voice. “She was born in Hurst Hall in Woodshire, and she ran away from her home to marry a Captain Ashley. It was a sad story; Aunt Cecily has often told it to me.”

“Who is Aunt Cecily?” asked Mr Alderstone, quickly.

“My mother’s sister, Cecily Woodburn. Grandmamma was married first to Captain Ashley, and then to Mr Woodburn.”

“If I had known all this last night, I might

have cheered a sad heart," said Mr Alderstone, in a thoughtful tone. "Mr Charles Hurstone has lately returned from abroad to take possession of the estate, and he is utterly alone in the world, as I have told you. Both his brothers died unmarried; and he, himself, is a childless widower, whose sole aim in life is to find his sister's children.





## CHAPTER XIV.

### “THE LITTLE MAIDEN WALK'D DEMURE.”

THE charade party was a complete success. Everybody said so, and Daisy echoed the general verdict like a parrot. She had watched the performers without realizing in the least what they were about, and the whole entertainment had seemed to her like a confused dream.

Her thoughts were entirely occupied with the news that Mr Alderstone had brought. She was no longer a friendless little nobody, dependent on the charity of her father's brother, but the great-niece of a man of fortune, who was longing to claim her. And Aunt Cecily too;—the bitter separation would soon be at an end.

Mr Alderstone had departed with Cecily Woodburn's address in his pocket-book, and

had left Daisy with a promise to write to Mr Hurstone that very day.

All that she could now do was to wait patiently and silently for results.

No one in the house had the faintest idea of these new hopes of hers. Her conversation with Mr Alderstone was as safe as if they had talked with closed doors; safer perhaps, for even closed doors are scarcely such a safeguard as a pre-occupied crowd. There were a good many people in the drawing-room when Mr Alderstone had entered, most of them were strangers to him; and fortunately for Daisy they had not realized the fact of his popularity. As to Rhoda and Maud, they had quite given up paying court to him, and had never forgiven his marked notice of Daisy.

It was no wonder that Daisy was absent while the festivities were going on. Mrs Allen, a talkative old lady, tried to draw her out in vain. She thought the little orphan cousin a stupid girl, and plainly expressed her opinion to Rhoda.

"She has never been at a party before,"

Rhoda answered. "And of course her advantages have been few. I daresay you have heard that poor Uncle Andrew made a silly marriage."

"Yes, I have heard something about it," replied the old lady in a sympathetic tone. "It must be a trial for you to have this young girl in the house, my dear."

"Certainly it was a nuisance at first," Rhoda admitted. "But we are getting used to her, and she is inoffensive and good-natured."

"She ought to make herself as agreeable as possible," said Mrs Allen. "Your father has given her a home with his own daughters; her obligation to him is immense!"

"Oh, yes; papa is very good to her," responded Rhoda, with a glance at Daisy's quiet little figure in a distant corner. "It is unfortunate that she has no other relations who can help her."

"Relations," said a chatty old gentleman coming up at the moment. "I know an

old man in Woodshire, just returned from abroad, who would give the world to find some relations. He has fifteen thousand a year, and wants to share it with his kith and kin, if there are any to be found."

"Some kinsfolk are sure to turn up," Mrs Allen remarked. "They always do."

Maud had not forgotten her trouble, but excitement, and the consciousness of looking handsome, had brought back her spirits, and, with her, high spirits generally meant insolence. She spied Daisy in her corner, watching the dancers with dreamy eyes, and at the sight of that serene face her first feeling of antagonism came back. Daisy was not, she thought, so humble as she ought to have been. That very afternoon she had again engrossed Mr Alderstone's attention in a most unwarrantable manner; and there she sat, looking perfectly composed, and not in the least envious.

"What did you think of the charades?" asked Maud, stepping up to her cousin's side.

"They were very good indeed," answered Daisy, rather abstractedly.



"You ought to be enjoying yourself," said Maud, with her haughtiest air, "instead of looking as if everything bored you. It is all very well for patricians to look bored,—it is their chronic condition,—but plebeians should be grateful for being entertained. It is quite too absurd to see you affecting the languid indifference of Lady Somebody."

"I am not affecting anything," was the quiet reply.

"O yes, you are. You are sitting there and trying to forget that you are Daisy Nobody. By the way I have just heard that an old man with fifteen thousand a year is advertising for relations. Don't you wish you could prove a kinship?"

"Yes," said Daisy, with a smile.

Maud went her way, and Daisy was left to dream on in peace.

Five days passed away, and then came a letter to Dr Garnett from Mr Hurstone of Hurst Hall.

That letter arrived by mid-day post, and the doctor found it lying on his study-table

when he returned from his morning round of visits. He read it twice from beginning to end before he thoroughly realized its full meaning.

Little Daisy, the orphan niece to whom he had given a home, was to be a dependant on his bounty no more. She and her aunt, Cecily Woodburn, would be the joint-heiresses of Charles Hurstone, uncle of the late Mrs Andrew Garnett. The letter was most courteously worded, and the writer thanked the doctor in the warmest terms for the kindness he had shown to the grandchild of his beloved sister, Rosa Cecilia Hurstone.

So meek little Daisy would be an heiress, and would go to live with her great-uncle in Hurst Hall! He could not refuse to part with the child; Mr Hurstone was a lonely man, and her presence would be the solace of his old age. Yet the doctor felt a faint pang when he reflected that Andrew's daughter would be his charge no longer. There had been a certain pleasure, scarcely acknowledged even to himself, in doing something to atone for the old coldness to Andrew.

After all, Andrew's sole fault had been that foolish marriage of his; and it had turned out to be not so foolish as had been supposed. Dr Garnett had never seen his brother's wife; all that he had known was the fact of her being a plain farmer's daughter without a fortune.

He had had other views for Andrew; there had been an heiress looked out for him, and the elder brother had decided that the younger should come up to town and marry at once. And then the news of Andrew's marriage with Rose Woodburn had put an end to Philip's scheme, and steeled his heart against the poor young sister-in-law who was utterly unknown to him.

As to Daisy, she already knew all that Cecily could tell of the happiness in store for them both.

A letter from Cecily had arrived by the first post, and it stated that she had already seen Mr Hurstone face to face, and was joyfully acknowledged as his niece. If Dr Garnett consented to give up the guardian-

ship of Daisy, Cecily would come to Portland Place herself, and take full possession of her beloved charge again.

Not a word had Daisy spoken of that letter. There were still several guests in the house, and her cousins were making preparations for more parties. With a quiet strength the girl controlled herself, and concealed her joy as resolutely as she had hidden her sorrow.

When the first shock of surprise was over, the doctor himself felt some pride in announcing that his niece was an heiress. He called her into the study before luncheon, and gave her Mr Hurstone's letter to read.

"You will let me go, Uncle Philip?" she said, looking up at him with eager eyes.

"Yes, Daisy," he answered. "I cannot forget that Mr Hurstone is childless, while I have daughters of my own. But you are anxious to leave me; have you been unhappy here?"

The keen glance looked her through and through. Daisy flushed up, but answered truthfully.

"Not altogether unhappy, Uncle Philip. I have never forgotten your goodness in giving me a home."

"You have not got on well with your cousins?" he said, inquiringly.

"I don't think they liked me at first," Daisy replied. "It was quite natural that they should look on me as an intruder. But indeed things were beginning to be much pleasanter, and if I had stayed—"

"Well, if you had stayed, Daisy?"

"Perhaps I might have won them to like me, Uncle Philip. At any rate I should have gone on trying; and I hope they will remember me kindly when I am gone."

"We shall all remember you kindly," he said, laying a hand on her shoulder.

At luncheon, in his cool, matter-of-fact way, the doctor spoke of Mr Hurstone's letter before his daughters and their guests. Mrs Allen recalled the story that the chatty old gentleman had told her, and was stricken mute with astonishment. She glanced at Daisy, and wondered how she could ever have thought

the girl stupid ! She was pretty, positively very pretty ; and Hurstone Hall would be a comfortable place for a lively old lady to visit. Mrs Allen resolved to make up assiduously to Daisy.

Rhoda and Maud were both silent. The latter flushed a deep red, and kept her eyes steadily fixed on her plate ; it seemed to her at that moment as if the fates had conspired to make a fool of her. First there had been Gertrude's treachery ; and now here was the despised and long-suffering Daisy exalted over her head.

After luncheon Daisy slipped away to write letters, and then indeed the tongues of the guests were loosened. The doctor, as usual, had gone out to his patients again, and Rhoda and Maud had to answer the questions that were showered upon them. They did not like their task ; moreover they knew no more than their father had already told, and could only say that they had seen a drawing of Hurst Hall in Daisy's portfolio.

Meanwhile Daisy, upstairs, was pouring

out a heartful of joy to Aunt Cecily. It was a bleak day; a cutting wind made its way through every crevice, and there was no fire in the grate; but the girl wrapped herself in a thick shawl, and wrote as if she were basking in summer sunshine. A light snow began to fall; the brief afternoon light was swiftly fading away, and as Daisy closed the envelope and wrote the address, she became conscious for the first time that her fingers were getting stiff with cold.

Hastening downstairs she laid her letter on the hall table, ready to be carried to the post, and then entered the drawing-room chilled to the bone, but as happy as any girl in the kingdom. There was the usual afternoon assembly, and the butler was bringing in tea. Mrs Allen stretched out her hand as Daisy advanced, and pointed to a low chair near her own seat.

"You are positively shivering, dear child," said the old lady, quite tenderly. "Have you been sitting in a cold room? It was very unwise and imprudent, my dear."

It was the first time that Mrs Allen had ever manifested any anxiety about Daisy's health or comfort. But the girl gave her smile for smile, and accepted the fireside seat ; courtesy, even when it is not worth much, should never be quite disregarded, thought Daisy to herself.

"Your life will be much changed now," remarked Mrs Allen, taking one of the chilled little hands in her own. "It is all quite too charmingly romantic, my dear, and you are just fit for the heroine of a romance. What a fuss the world will make with you !"

"'I have not loved the world, nor the world me,'" said Daisy, quoting the line on the impulse of the moment.

"You don't know it yet," replied the old lady, quickly. "It is easy to dislike a world that has neglected us. But when it flatters and woos, there are very few who can resist its blandishments."

"Unspotted from the world" was in Daisy's mind, but she did not utter the words although they shaped themselves into a



prayer. Mrs Allen found it impossible to break through that delicate frost-work of reserve that veiled the girl's inner self, and at last the attempt was given up altogether.





## CHAPTER XV.

### FAREWELLS.

A TELEGRAM had arrived, stating the hour when Cecily Woodburn might be expected in Portland Place ; and Daisy, in her room, was busily collecting all those belongings of hers that had been unpacked with such a heavy heart.

A fire was burning briskly in the grate, and Jane was on her knees upon the floor, filling Daisy's trunk with quick hands that rendered willing service. Drawers and wardrobe were being emptied fast, when Rhoda knocked at her cousin's door.

"Come in," said the soft voice.

Rhoda entered, rather shyly, bearing a little tray with wine and biscuits.

"I came to see how you were getting on," she said. "Jane has nearly finished, hasn't

she? Don't tire yourself, Daisy; you have a journey before you."

"Oh, I am not in the least tired," Daisy answered, looking up with a bright face.

Rhoda sighed. The one girl was going forth into a life of light, and warmth, and love, while the other would remain shut up in a prison of her own making. There were not many words spoken till Jane had left the room, and then Rhoda sat down by the fire.

"I suppose it will be a long time before we see you again, Daisy," she said in a constrained voice. "You will not care, perhaps, to visit Portland Place?"

"Mr Hurstone and Aunt Cecily will not part with me very soon, I think," rejoined Daisy. "But I don't know why we should not meet, Rhoda. I hope you will come to Woodshire."

A flush of surprise and pleasure tinged Rhoda's face for a moment. The invitation had been so readily and cordially given, that she could not doubt its sincerity.

"Thank you," she said, a little awkwardly.

"I should like to see your new home. But I daresay you will be too happy to remember us."

"Happiness ought not to make me forget my friends," answered Daisy. "No, Rhoda, I shall often think of you, and I shall write if you will like to hear from me."

Again Rhoda looked pleased.

"I shall be glad to get letters from you," she said. "I thought that, perhaps, you would put me altogether out of your mind. I—that is—we did not give you a hearty welcome here, and you cannot be very fond of us, Daisy."

Daisy was standing before the fire, resting one little foot on the fender, and one hand upon the mantelpiece. After Rhoda had spoken there was a short pause; Daisy's colour went and came, and then she turned and suddenly knelt down by Rhoda's side.

"Dear," she said, laying her clasped hands on her cousin's lap. "I think it must have been my fault that you did not like me better. I often wonder why it is so hard for souls to

come together ;—indeed, Rhoda, I wanted to be loved, and I did not know how to make you love me.”

Tears were rising to Rhoda’s eyes; the ice that had gathered over her heart was thawing fast.

“We were not so kind as we ought to have been, Daisy,” she confessed ; “and Maud was often cruel and rude in her speeches. This household is not very happy, I am afraid. There always seems to be something lacking.”

Daisy’s heart told her what that something was. The Garnetts were all living a hard selfish life, in which love had no room to expand its wings, and play its own important part.

But she did not venture to speak the truth just then, lest it should sound harshly in her cousin’s ears. A delicate instinct told her that the time for plain-dealing had not yet come, although perhaps it was not far off. It would be better for Rhoda to hear the truth from her own heart, before she heard it from a friend’s lips.

The outward voices are always listened to when they come as an echo of the inward tones. Rhoda's conscience was already beginning to make itself heard; and it was wise, at first, to let it speak alone. Daisy was not an impatient spirit; young as she was, she had wisdom enough to know that one must not be in too great a hurry, even to do good.

She kissed Rhoda, and then quietly repeated her invitation.

And Rhoda actually found herself thinking of a visit to Woodshire as a great pleasure to come.

"Is all the packing done?" asked Maud, abruptly opening the door. "You are not over-burdened with luggage, Daisy; I suppose you will soon accumulate things when you are at Hurst Hall. What a change it will be! A girl without a penny to become the heiress of a man with fifteen thousand a year! I hope it won't turn your brain."

"Daisy's brain is in no danger," remarked Rhoda.

"Oh, but I think it is. And it's absurd to see her affectation of indifference; it would be more honest to confess that she feels excited and elated."

"I don't see that there is a need for any confession," Rhoda said coldly.

"I should think a great deal better of her if she were more natural and open," cried Maud, with heat.

"You forget, Maud, that your opinion is not of the least consequence to Daisy," rejoined Rhoda, in a tone of quiet scorn. "In a few hours she will have left this house, and all its disagreeables, far behind. And you have not made her life here so sweet that she should care what you think of her."

"But she was received here when she was homeless," said Maud, rudely.

"It was not your kindness, Maud, that gave her a shelter."

"Nor yours, Rhoda. You hated the thought of her coming as much as I did, only you took it more coolly."

"I know," said Rhoda, with a frank look

at Daisy. "I am sorry for my coldness and prejudice now."

"You are only sorry because Daisy has risen. If she had stayed at the foot of the ladder you would have gone on despising her. And now you are mean enough to try to creep into her favour."

"Nonsense, Maud," said Daisy, good-humouredly. "You know it is not in Rhoda's nature to creep. Pray let my last hours here be peaceful, and let us all part as friends."

"You will find hundreds of girls willing to be friendly with fifteen thousand a year," sneered Maud.

"You forget that Aunt Cecily will share with me," Daisy answered, patiently. "Nothing will be our own while Mr Hurstone lives ; and I hope he will live very long."

Maud tried to put on a look of incredulity. In her heart of hearts she did not dislike Daisy as she had disliked her once ; but she was envious and mortified. The guests downstairs had been talking over Daisy's good fortune, and singing her praises until



she was sick of the sound of it all. They had never discovered that Daisy was lovely and clever till she was known to be an heiress. And those two flagrant old sycophants, Mrs Allen and Mrs Jackson, had suddenly found out evidences of blue blood, and a certain high-bred air that was peculiar to all the Hurstones! Maud had never felt so disgusted with the world and its ways in all her life; and she could scarcely help venting some of her bitterness on Daisy.

Aunt Cecily had arrived in town on the preceding day, and had spent the night in her old lodgings. Punctually at half-past eleven a fly stopped at the door of the doctor's house, and Cecily Woodburn crossed its threshold for the first time in her life.

The doctor, himself, received her. He had snatched a few minutes from his duties to be present at her arrival, and to say farewell to his niece.

Cecily's beauty surprised and almost startled him. Tall and stately, her cheeks tinged with rich colour, and her deep blue eyes shining with suppressed feeling, she

entered the drawing-room like a queen. Yet there was no haughtiness in her manner; it was perfectly gentle and well-bred—the assured manner of a gentlewoman who had a firm footing in the world.

Even Maud was astonished and subdued, and behaved with unwonted meekness. No one who saw Cecily that day ever forgot her afterwards; and later on when she was an acknowledged beauty, and her portrait hung upon the Royal Academy walls, Dr Garnett's friends remembered with pleasure that they had met her as Miss Woodburn. As to the doctor, when he looked at her and listened to her voice, he wondered if Rose had been anything like this queenly woman?

"If there was a resemblance between the sisters," he thought, "I can forgive poor Andrew for his infatuation."

But Rose Garnett, as we know, had never resembled Cecily.

Daisy spoke her adieux with her usual quietness; even Maud relented at the last and kissed her with something like affection.

The doctor felt a strange pang when it came to his turn to say good-bye. He did not know anything about the Hurstones and those high-bred airs which Mrs Allen declared that Daisy had inherited ; but he had discovered a strong likeness to his own mother in that gentle little face.

He saw the resemblance still more clearly when he stooped to give Daisy a farewell kiss. All the best and tenderest influences that had ever been brought to bear upon his life, seemed to return at that moment. He saw, once more, the look of parting love that his mother had given him before she passed away,—a look that was eloquent with the yearning to speak last words. There was the same mute desire in Daisy's eyes ; what was it, then, that the young girl longed to say ?

A certain inner consciousness told the doctor that, great man though he was, Daisy's tender heart was not at rest about him.

“ Goodbye, dear uncle ; God bless you,” she said. And that was all.

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She followed Cecily into the fly, and was driven away. A few minutes later the doctor entered his own carriage and drove off again, and his daughters went back to their fireside with a depression of spirits that they could not shake off.

“It is just because the weather is so cold,” said Maud. “See what an ugly grey day it is! I shall be all the better for a dance to-night.”





## CHAPTER XVI.

"PARKS WITH OAK AND CHESTNUT SHADY."

ONE morning Daisy woke from a deep sleep, and fell to wondering vaguely where she was?

She found herself lying in a room with panelled walls, furnished with quaint chairs and chests of drawers that would have fetched a fabulous price in the antique furniture shops in town. Over the carved oak chimney-piece hung an old sampler in a black frame, and on the shelf below were two tall brass candlesticks of ancient make, shining in the gleams of wintry light that made their way into the chamber.

Daisy's slumber had been broken by the merry crackling of a fire ; yellow flames were darting and curling round such mossy logs as one only sees in the country ; and the warm glow was reflected by ancient brass handles

and old polished wood, dark with age. It was time to get up ; and as she rubbed her sleepy eyes she began to realize that this day was the beginning of life in her new home.

It was a sharp morning, bright with the sunshine of a clear January ; and Daisy, now fairly awake, longed to get a glimpse of the country that surrounded Hurst Hall.

Drawing up the blind she looked down upon an expanse of soft turf, all the greener from a light fall of snow that had lately melted ; and beyond this smooth sward was a great wall of trees. Such trees ; in all her life Daisy had never seen anything so beautiful as that mazy network of boughs ! She understood then, that her room was at the back of the Hall, and that the stately old house stood in the midst of its own far-stretching park.

There were long sylvan aisles, crossed by winter sunbeams, leading into sweet wildernesses where wild creatures made their homes. As Daisy tried to look deep down into their mysteries she thought of all that

poets had sung of scenes like these ;—surely that dim green path might have opened out before the feet of the Prince when he went to wake the Sleeping Beauty from her enchanted slumber ! And somewhere in those glades might be standing that mighty oak that hid his knotted knees in fern, and babbled to the lover of his lady !

Beyond the far-reaching acres of woodland now delicately frosted by the breath of January, a chain of low hills bounded the view. Over the whole landscape hung the faint white haze which the morning sun, growing stronger and stronger, would soon dispel ; and Daisy knew that a thousand undreamed of beauties were lurking in the scene that lay before her eyes. It would take a lifetime, she thought, to find out all the charms of this new home of hers ; and her heart was full of thanksgiving.

There are some souls that thank God, passionately, for the beauty of His earth, and take delight in His fair hills and woods, even when the garden of their own life is laid

waste. There are poets (no matter whether they can rhyme or not) who can turn bravely from the disappointments of the working-day world, and find a boundless satisfaction in the world of nature. While sunbeams shine, and leaves and grasses grow, life is sweet to them; and they see the outward signs of a Divine love, where others behold only the common sweetness of rural scenery. Daisy had read God's love in her Michaelmas daisies, hemmed in by smoky walls; but here it was written in larger and fairer characters. Yet if she had held no spiritual communion with her daisies, it is doubtful whether the broad woods of the Hurstones would have given her any lasting joy.


Still in a mood of quiet happiness she dressed, and went downstairs, and Aunt Cecily met her in the hall.

"Uncle Charles will forgive you for being late this morning," said Cecily with a kiss. "He is in the library with the steward, so you and I can have a quiet hour in the breakfast-room."



She crossed the hall, and Daisy followed her, casting an upward glance at the massive oaken roof which had been indistinguishable last night. On each side of the hall-door was a quaint old window, filled with stained glass; and soft rays of purple and red fell upon Cecily's grey gown and Daisy's black garments. It seemed to Daisy that she had never seen Aunt Cecily in her proper sphere until that moment; and yet there was little change in her bearing or attire; the latter, perhaps, was more costly than it had been in former days, but it was as simple as ever.

She was wearing a gown of squirrel-grey cloth, trimmed fully with fur of the same hue. At Lady Jessie Boyd's request, she had ceased to dress in mourning. Lady Jessie had seen too much of mourning, she said; and when Miss Woodburn wore black it must be relieved by just a faint touch of colour. The grey cloth gown had been a gift from Lady Jessie, herself; and Cecily was fond of it. In Daisy's eyes, those soft borderings of fur round the neck and sleeves gave her some-



thing of an antique look, and harmonized well with the old oak carvings and emblazoned windows. Cecily, with her regal grace and beauty, was the worthy successor of those grand dames who had dwelt in Hurst Hall centuries ago.

The breakfast-room was a small apartment, communicating with the great dining-room, and forming in winter one of the cosiest nooks in the old mansion. A bright fire flung its cheery light over the sober colours of the room, and shone on the polished margin of black floor, and rich old Turkey carpet. Daisy sat down to her morning meal with a better appetite than she had ever brought to Dr Garnett's table.

She sat facing the mullioned windows with their thick wreaths of ivy, and looked out upon the sunny lawn. Cecily had taken a low seat by the fire, and was busy with some plain sewing.

"Aunt Cecily," said Daisy at last, "how is it that Uncle Charles is so rich? I heard Mr Alderstone say that no Hurstone had ever been so wealthy before."

"He made a fortune abroad;" Cecily answered. "He was a coffee planter. And then, too, his wife left him a great deal of money."

"He is the gentlest, kindest old man I ever saw," Daisy said warmly. "It is very easy to love him, for there is a look of you in his face. He has your deep blue eyes,—faded and dimmed, of course, but still beautiful."

"He is wonderfully like my mother, Daisy. And he was her favourite brother; she used often to talk of him. How happy it would have made her if she could have foreseen my coming to the old Hall!"

"It is such a pity that so many are dead who might have been made happy," Daisy sighed. "Grandmother and grandfather Woodburn, and my own father and mother,—all are gone. Only you and I are left to enjoy the good things of this life."

"And what are our good things compared with theirs who have entered into rest?"

"True, Aunt Cecily. But I should like

them all to know how comfortable we are now."

"Perhaps they do know, Daisy; we cannot tell. It is enough for us to be sure that they are at peace. My own past is so full of graves, dear, that I always feel I must rejoice soberly in the present."

Daisy was silent, neglecting her coffee-cup, and watching the sparrows flying in and out of their ivy-home. Suddenly glancing at Cecily she was struck with the gravity of the beautiful face that bent over the sewing, and her heart gave a little throb of anxiety.

"Aunt Cecily," she said, "were you sorry to come here, and leave Lady Jessie?"

"I love her very much," replied Cecily, her colour deepening. "It was a pang to say good-bye, although she is only in the next county. And they were so fond of me."

"They, Aunt Cecily?"

"Yes; did I not tell you that little Lord Bracy, the son of the Earl of Hazlewood, was with us? He is a delicate child, and his father sent him to Lady Jessie; and so he


became my pupil, Daisy,—my pupil and my pet.”

“ You did not say much about him in your letters,” rejoined Daisy, thoughtfully. And then she remembered that Cecily’s letters had been filled from beginning to end with answers to her own questions.

Life at Portland Place had been altogether so trying and difficult to Daisy, that she had scarcely given a thought to the kind of life that her aunt was leading. She had been constantly seeking help and counsel from her dearest friend, and it never occurred to her that Cecily could ever take a deep interest in anything beside her Daisy.

It seemed strange and almost unnatural that Cecily should feel a pang of regret at leaving Lady Jessie ;—and the little lord, what was he to her ?

Her breakfast came rather abruptly to a conclusion. At first it had been pleasant to linger over cup and plate, and watch the sparrows fluttering about the ivy ; but now a sudden fit of restlessness had come upon her, and she rose from the table.



"There is a great deal of unpacking to be done," she said, in a serious tone :

Cecily glanced at her and laughed outright.

"Why do you look so grave about it, Daisy?" she asked. "As yet, you and I have never been burdened with many earthly possessions, and the whole of our property is easily contained in four travelling trunks! They can be emptied, I think, and their contents stowed away, in about two hours."

"Did I look grave?" said Daisy, smiling. "I daresay I am feeling a little lost and overwhelmed; but I shall get used to everything by-and-by."

As Daisy had remarked, it certainly was very easy to love Uncle Charles Hurstone. He was a gentle-mannered and gentle-natured man, who had always been snubbed by his two brothers, and not much considered by his parents. They had all been fond of pomp, and had carried their heads very high in the world, while he was a shy youth with quiet habits, and a decided leaning towards mer-

careful pursuits. And he was a youth still when he said farewell to the old hall, and went out to the coffee-plantations of the Brazils.

A life-time went by before he set foot on his native soil again. Very few letters ever went to him from Hurst Hall after his sister ran away from her home; she had been the only member of his family who had returned his affection, and at last he ceased to hear even from her. Then he himself married and formed fresh ties; and new interests began to twine about his lonely life and make it beautiful. He found royal compensation for the coldness of parents and brothers; God was good, and earth was kind to one who had known but little kindness in his youth.

There is often an Indian summer for those who have been chilled in their spring-tide. If we look closely into the lives around us we shall see that many who sowed the seed in tears are now reaping a golden harvest. We meet men and women, known as liberal souls,

giving freely of the treasures that their own honest hands have won; and then we remember the forlorn boy who was the ugly duckling of his home nest, or recognise in the genial woman that pale girl who used to be the trampled one of the family.

And we shall find, too, on fairly thinking of it, that when there are only thorns and thistles in the home-garden, the heartsease is sure to bloom outside its walls. Some of God's singers have had their songs despised, ay, and even stifled, by those who were the first to hear them. Afterwards, when the world shouted applause, the home-circle swelled the burst; and admiring relations followed in the train of one who had been "without honour" while he sojourned among them. Well is it for them if their genius has a kindly nature and is willing to overlook the past. They, at any rate, are seldom too proud to crawl to his feet, and pick up the scattered laurel leaves that have fallen from his crown.


Charles Hurstone had never been a genius, but he possessed certain serviceable gifts



which he turned to good account. He was making one fortune when his wife brought him another; and, better still, he had received the blessing "that maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow thereto."

Many and many happy years were spent in that tropical home; children played among its rich flowers, and gathered its wealth of fruit, but they did not live to see manhood. At last, in the decline of his days, Charles Hurstone found himself a lonely widower; and then came the summons to the old hall, whose empty rooms were waiting for the last of the Hurstones.

A happy man was Charles Hurstone when he had found the child and grandchild of his dead sister. The house was theirs; his wealth was theirs; all that he asked in return was love, and a few of those attentions that are so sweet to the old. But he was by no means an exacting man; affection and tenderness had been so scantily doled out to him in his boyhood that he would have been content with but a small portion in his age.



Cecily and Daisy, however, were cheerful love-givers, and Mr Hurstone's life seemed to be growing brighter and brighter as it neared the close.





## CHAPTER XVII.

“ THROUGH THE LONG REACH OF DESERT  
WOODS.”

THREE days after her arrival at Hurst Hall, Daisy found herself perfectly at ease in her new home, and on the best of terms with its master. It was difficult to believe that they had never met in some former state of life, so perfectly did his young niece understand all his ways, and enter into all that interested him. As to Cecily, it was sometimes hard to realise that she was not, verily and indeed, that bright sister who had been the friend of his boyhood. But she was handsomer than her mother had ever been.

The fourth morning was one of those radiant days that January sometimes gives us in her best mood. Every tree glittered with the silver filigree-work of the frost-fairies ;

every inch of greensward twinkled with their pearls and diamonds. Uncle Charles rose from the breakfast-table to go straight into the library, where his steward awaited him, and his nieces were left to their own devices.

"What a perfect morning for a walk," said Cecily, looking out across the glittering lawn.

"Let us go out, Aunt Cecily," cried Daisy, in delight. "It is an age since we have had a good long ramble together. Our last was in autumn,—just before poor papa died," she added gravely.

"Come then," Cecily answered; "the beauty of a winter day does not last long. And we must wrap up, Daisy; it is well that our sealskin paletots arrived last night. How kind of Uncle Charles to get them!"

They were soon dressed and ready to start. The sealskin admirably became them both; the little cap of rich brown fur sat as gracefully on Daisy's fair head as on her aunt's dark braids. It was cold indeed; the keen air met them in the carriage-drive, and made them plunge their hands into the depths of

their muffs. Uncle Charles, looking out of the library window, caught a glimpse of those two figures, and for a moment forgot to listen to his steward.

Other people looked at them too, with much respectful admiration. "A pair of beauties, that they be," said the coachman to the gardener. Labourers, going through the park, saluted them with shy pleasure; and a rosy maid pointed them out to her companion with a deferential whisper. Everybody in the village of Hurst Gate felt that he or she had some right to criticise, in a humble way, the new ladies at the Hall.

On they went, through one of those long aisles which Daisy had desired to traverse. On the right and left lay that bewildering maze of woodland, all glorious with the jewellery of winter; and once or twice they paused to look deep into the shades. They could see velvet moss and polished ivy clinging to mighty old roots, and heard the light rustle of little furry feet across the carpet of dead leaves; and then they continued their

way with quicker steps, longing to go farther and farther into these beautiful solitudes.

There was no change in the brightness of the morning. The clear wintry blue was flecked with thin flakes of white cloud, and the air was still,—so still that the fall of a dry twig by the roadside could be distinctly heard. The road had evidently been kept in good repair ; it was hard and dry, and ran evenly through the dark woods that seemed to grow denser as Cecily and Daisy went on.

"I don't want to keep to the straight road," Daisy said at last. "An adventurous mood has come upon me, Aunt Cecily ; let us find some turning that will lead us out of Uncle Charles's demesne, and bring us to mysterious regions."

"We are likely to lose our way if we are too venturesome," said Cecily, who had, however, quite enough girlhood left in her to sympathise with Daisy's spirit.

"Never mind ; it would be rather nice to be lost," replied Daisy, gaily. "Because, you know, we are sure to be found again."

It seemed as if some listening wood-sprite had heard Daisy's wish, and had opened a magic way of egress; for at that moment they did indeed come suddenly to a turning.

It was a narrow path, moss-grown, and rough with knotty roots; the kind of path that would be half hidden by dog-roses and brambles in summer-time. But even on this wintry day it was inviting to young feet, and promised such treasures of ferns and mosses as could never be found in the open road. Neither Cecily nor Daisy could be proof against its enchantment, and both entered it, Cecily leading the way.

The sweet scent of moist earth and evergreens came up with every step; and then a hare suddenly leaped across their way, and was lost in the underwood. Cecily turned her head, and spoke laughingly to Daisy.

"If we were superstitious we should turn back," she said. "There is an old wives' fable that says it is unlucky to meet a hare."

"It is too pretty to bring ill luck," Daisy answered. "I have never been so near to a

'merry brown hare' before. Lead on, Aunt Cecily."

And Cecily led on, although the path grew narrower, and the thicket denser as they proceeded.

The silence of the woods had hitherto been broken only by those forest sounds which are familiar to all rustic ears. The gentle flutter of dry leaves stirred by unseen wings; the fall of decayed boughs; the soft noises made by rabbits and squirrels in their haunts; and the occasional chirp of a bird only seemed to deepen the hush that prevailed. But all at once a long moan met their ears; a wail that pierced the still winter air, and set their hearts wildly beating.

Another wail, a pushing and crashing of branches, and then a tall woman confronted them. Poor Daisy uttered a little cry of terror and clung to Cecily's arm; and Cecily herself began to wish that they had not extended their ramble beyond the safe bounds of the village. They had done, she felt, an imprudent thing in coming so far without a



protector ; but she feared far more for Daisy than for herself.

The woman was standing in a little opening by the side of the path ; here a tree had evidently been felled, and the space around the stump had been partially cleared. She was a wild, gaunt figure in a tattered gown, with hair hanging loosely over her shoulders ; but neither torn garments nor dishevelled hair would have alarmed Cecily Woodburn. It was the look in the eyes, half fierce, half bewildered, that drove the colour out of Cecily's cheeks, and made her for a moment as pale as her niece.

"They are a bad lot,—those Hurstones ;—a bad, wicked, cruel lot," said the woman, looking savagely into Cecily's face. "What are you wandering in their woods for ? They'll murder you if they find you."

"We are strangers here," Cecily answered, pressing Daisy's hand, and speaking in a quiet tone.

"Strangers, are you ? Then you haven't heard that Frank Hurstone murdered my

husband. It was here, just here, that he gave him his death-blows. I tell you if you value your lives, you must get out of these woods," she added, raising her voice almost to a scream. "Keep to this path and go on till you come to the hedge, and there you'll find the gap that I came through."

Mechanically Cecily and Daisy moved forward, and she drew aside to let them pass.

"Make haste, make haste," she cried, there's another Hurstone at the Hall, they say. But don't fear, he shan't follow you. I'll stay here and turn him back if he comes ; —go on, go on !"

There was nothing for it but to obey. Still holding Daisy's hand, and half-dragging her, Cecily went on and on, not daring to turn her head. She could hear Daisy's panting sighs of agonized fear, but she did not venture to speak an encouraging word till the hedge came in sight.

"She has not followed us, Daisy ; she does not mean us any harm." Cecily murmured the words as she pulled Daisy through the

gap, and out into a high road. But the mood of an insane woman might change in a moment, and already she might be on their track.

At that instant Cecily Woodburn would have given anything that she possessed to see a friendly human face. But the road was quite deserted, and she could only drag the trembling Daisy onward in sheer desperation.

The way was bordered by woods on the right and left, and those on the right were the Hurstone woods which they had just quitted. On the left the timber did not grow so thickly; trees had evidently been cut down, and the brushwood had been cleared away.

Daisy's face and lips had lost all vestige of colour, and her slight frame trembled from head to foot. Had Rhoda and Maud been near her, they would not have scrupled to call her a coward, and laugh at her fears; but Daisy was constitutionally delicate, and her nerves had never recovered from the shock of her father's sudden death.

Moreover the woman's aspect had some-

thing terrible in it. She was as tall and strong as a man, and the fierceness of her look might well have made even a stout heart quail. Cecily felt it would be impossible to lead Daisy back into the Hurstone woods again, and she dreaded the effect of the woman's reappearance. Relief, however, was very near at hand; a sharp turn in the road showed them a little thatched lodge, and a large white gate.

The gate yielded to Cecily's hand at once, and they found themselves in front of the little lodge. A knock at the door was answered at once by a motherly dame in a white cap, who saw at a glance that something was amiss.

"Walk in, ladies," she said, kindly, and her firm hand helped poor Daisy over the threshold, and led her to a chintz-covered easy-chair by the fire. The sense of comfort and safety soon brought back composure; and Daisy began to fear that she had been silly and weak.

"Indeed, Aunt Cecily, I am sorry to have

been so foolish," she said. "But that woman's face was terrible, and she was so big and strong! And then, too, she said such dreadful things."

"Be quiet for a while, Daisy," Cecily answered, soothingly. And turning to the dame she gave a brief account of their adventure.

"It was Martha Weever," said the lodge-keeper, gravely. "She has broken out into one of her mad fits again. Poor soul; she has had trouble enough to turn her brain, and it seems to me that she gets worse and worse. Still, ma'am, people say she is harmless;—I hardly think she would have hurt you; her spite is all against the Hurstones."

"What have the Hurstones done to her?" Cecily asked. "Well, ma'am, it's a sad story. About two years ago Martha's husband, Harry Weever, must needs go apoeaching in the Hurstone woods. Harry was a lazy fellow, and not over-honest in his ways; he never bore a good character in these parts, but for all that, his wife dearly

loved him. Nothing would stop the poaching, and at last Mr Frank Hurstone, who was then living all alone at the Hall, got furious. He was a big, resolute sort of man, Mr Frank was, without a bit of fear in him. He went out, one night, with three or four keepers, and then there was a fearful fight."

"And Martha's husband?"

"Harry Weever wasn't one who'd give in, ma'am; and Mr Frank Hurstone dealt him hard blows. He could hit very hard, Mr Frank could. Any way, Harry got the worst of it, and was so badly knocked about that he couldn't be taken to prison. Two men who went poaching with him were sent to gaol; but Harry was let alone to die."

"And did not Frank Hurstone show any pity?"

"No, ma'am; the Hurstones never did show pity. The man, he said, had brought it all upon himself; and when Harry died, poor Martha lost her senses. Still she's pretty rational at times, and being a very strong woman she can work in the fields,

and do a good many things to earn a living. The folks pity her hereabouts ; she has three children, and she's always gentle to them, even in her wildest moods. But she had a bad sickness last autumn, and her head got worse. And she's been told, I daresay, that another Mr Hurstone has come from foreign parts to the Hall, and that has just set her raging."

"Has she ever attacked any one in her fits of madness?" Cecily inquired.

"No, ma'am; never. For some time after her husband's death she was only melancholy-mad. I don't know how it would have been if she had ever met Mr Frank Hurstone, but he didn't long out-live poor Harry. He went travelling soon after that poaching affair; and six or seven months ago he died in the south of France." "I never saw Mr Frank Hurstone," said Cecily; "but he was my mother's brother. And we have come to live at the Hall with Mr Charles Hurstone."

"I'm afraid, ma'am, I've been letting my

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tongue run too fast," said the good dame, with a curtsy. "But I'm truly glad, indeed, that poor mad Martha didn't suspect that you had come from Hurst Hall."







## CHAPTER XVIII.

“THEIR LIVES HENCEFORTH HAVE SEPARATE  
ENDS.”

LISTENING to the lodge-keeper's tale had almost made Daisy forget her fear in pity for Martha Weever's sorrows. The dame begged her to drink a glass of home-made ginger-wine, and did her utmost to show her guests respectful attention.

“’Tis a world of changes, ma’am,” said the good woman. “My old master died just before Christmas, and his heir is coming to-day to look at the place.”

“What is the place called?” Cecily asked.

“The Thicket, ma’am, and well named it is. Mr Warleigh was related to the late Countess of Hazlewood, and at his death all this property passed to the Earl. Not a very large property, nor in any way to be compared with the Hurstone estate. But there are some

good covers here, and the Earl of Hazlewood will use the house for a shooting-box, likely enough."

In after-days Daisy remembered that Cecily seemed to have suddenly regained her colour, and that the carmine on her cheeks was richer than it had been before the fright. The deep blue eyes were shining as they gazed earnestly on the speaker's face.

"My name is Rachel Spence," the dame went on. "I've been a widow twenty years; and my son was Mr Warleigh's groom. They say the Earl is sure to be kind to the old servants; so I hope, ma'am, I shall end my days in the lodge."

"So the Earl is expected to-day," said Cecily.

"Yes, ma'am; this afternoon. And as the little lady seems better, perhaps you'd both like to step up to the house and take a look. Not that there's much to see; it's but a poor place after Hurst Hall."

"Thank you," Cecily answered; "but we must be going homeward."

“Take my advice, ma’am, and let my son see you safe to the Hall. He’s a stout fellow, Bob is, and he knows Martha well. If you should chance to meet her, Bob would soon send her about her business.”

“We shall be glad to have a protector,” Cecily replied.

“Bob is in the stables, ma’am, I’ll call him at once. But ’tis only a step or two up to the house, if you’d like to come.”

Not unwillingly, Cecily and her niece followed Mrs Spence up the carriage-drive, and soon found themselves in front of a long, low house, quaintly and irregularly built, and smothered with ivy from end to end. They went in through a door-way with a Gothic arch, and learned from their conductress that the Thicket was really part of an old monastery.

They were first led into the drawing-room, a long room with small church-like windows at each end. It was full of faded yellow satin, and old needle-work, telling its own quiet story of womanly hands, now resting

from all labour ; and Daisy, at the far end of the apartment, soon lighted upon a water-colour drawing of two girlish figures in sashes and white frocks. It was an enchanting picture, she thought, falling in love at once with the soft, oval faces and brown eyes, and the masses of dark curls. Who were these girls, and were they still living —— ?

Her questions and speculations had got no farther than this, when she became conscious of a slight stir near the door. Turning her head, and looking towards the other end of the room, she saw a gentleman speaking to Aunt Cecily.

It was all strangely like a dream ; the adventure in the woods ; the dim room, and now this stranger advancing to meet her as if he were an old acquaintance. As he drew nearer, she saw that he had a long, thin, oval face, and brown eyes, that somehow reminded her of the eyes in the water-colour drawing. His manner was very quiet, and almost sad ; but he took her hand frankly in his ; and

Daisy heard Aunt Cecily saying that he was the Earl of Hazlewood.

Poor Mrs Spence was in quite a flutter outside the door, feeling that she had done nothing but take liberties all the morning, and horrified that the Earl should have arrived on foot, and before the expected time. But the matter was soon explained. Lord Hazlewood had not come from London, as previously arranged, but from his sister's house in the next county. The journey was not a long one; and when he reached the little country station, the bright weather tempted him to walk to the Thicket. His valet was left at the station with his portmanteau, and a carriage must be sent for the servant and luggage.

It was quickly decided that Cecily and Daisy should go back to the Hall in the carriage; and while they waited, the Earl talked to Cecily about his little son. His tone was earnest and often very low, so low that Daisy instinctively went back to the water-colour drawing, and left the speakers at the other end of the room.

"Here is the brougham," said Lord Hazlewood at last. "I see you are interested with that sketch," he added to Daisy. "Those two girls are my mother and her sister, in their school days. I am very glad the drawing has come into my possession."

Cecily was silent during the homeward drive, nor had Daisy any wish to talk. They returned to the Hall to find luncheon waiting, and Uncle Charles beginning to fidget at their prolonged absence.

It was no hard matter to move Charles Hurstone to pity; and the story of Martha Weever produced a deep impression upon his mind. Something must be done for the woman, and done quickly, and her children must be objects of his especial care. And as Cecily watched her uncle's anxious looks, and listened to his earnest words, she thanked God that the old family sin of heartlessness could not be laid to his charge.

The afternoon brought two visitors. The first was the Earl of Hazlewood who came to make a formal call on Mr Hurstone. The

Thicket was only a mile from Hurst Hall; and Lady Jessie Boyd had entrusted her brother with a letter and a book for Cecily.

The second caller was Miss Alderstone, who was Mr Hurstone's nearest neighbour, and lived in the old farm-house that Mr Alderstone had described to Daisy.

Daisy knew at once that this call was specially intended for herself, and she met Janet Alderstone with real pleasure. Janet was twenty; a sedate, comfortable-looking girl, with an air of being able to take care of herself and other people too. They had a good opportunity for becoming acquainted, for Lord Hazlewood had stationed himself by Cecily's side, and had drawn her into his conversation with Mr Hurstone; and Daisy and Janet were left to themselves, with a little table and cups of tea between them.

"My brother George gave me a good description of you," said Janet, with a frank smile at her new acquaintance. "He has a power of word-painting, I think."

"A wonderful power," Daisy answered.

"How well I remember the evening when I first met him! It had been a wretched day to me, all loneliness and gloom, and he led me out of my dreary little self, and into a bright world."

"That was like George," said Janet, well-pleased. "But there are some people who can never be led out of themselves, and on them his power is thrown away. By the way, do you recollect a Miss Sandon, who was staying at Dr Garnett's?"

"Yes, perfectly well," Daisy replied. "She was at my Uncle's house on the very evening when I first saw Mr Alderstone."

"George told us about her. He said she was as great a contrast to you as could well be imagined. I should think she must be an excellent specimen of the girl of the period;—Well, we shall have her in this neighbourhood by-and-by, I suppose."

"In this neighbourhood? Is Gertrude Sandon coming to Hurst-Gate?"

"Yes; she will be coming to Clover-Mead in the autumn to stay with my cousin, Mrs



Bellister. Clover Mead is a large white house, standing in a pretty meadow near the railway station ; I daresay you have noticed it."

"I think I have," said Daisy. "And Mrs Bellister,—is she anything like you?"

"O no ; she is a rich widow of thirty-five ; very gay and fashionable. She met Miss Sandon in Brighton, and they took a great fancy to each other."

"Poor Gerty," Daisy said, with an involuntary sigh.

"Did you like her? Were you friends?" Janet asked.

"I can hardly say that we were friends ; we saw so little of each other. But I should have been glad to have seen more of Gertrude Sandon."

"You puzzle me," said Janet. "George spoke of her as a frivolous, light-headed girl."

"She must have appeared frivolous to him. But I believe she has had many disadvantages, and no guidance at all."

"Don't you think guidance is always to be had, if we will only seek it?"

"Yes," Daisy answered ; "but all have not patience to wait for a guiding voice. The voice is long in coming, perhaps ; and then they grow rash, and follow their own impulses."

"You think that is Miss Sandon's case?"

"I do think so ; I cannot help feeling interested in her."

"If there had been anything solid in her character, I hardly fancy she would have found favour with Mrs Bellister," said Janet. "My cousin is the veriest butterfly I have ever known. We like her pretty well, and when she does settle here we are always on good terms. But Harriet Bellister is one of those women who never will take life in earnest. 'Vive la bagatelle,' is her motto ; and she does not seem to understand anything serious. Amusement is her sole aim."

"It is a pity that Gertrude has found such a friend," sighed Daisy.

"But Miss Sandon would scarcely have been happy with any one of quiet tastes," Janet remarked.

"I don't know," Daisy rejoined. "It is so difficult to tell what will make people happy."

"And happiness lies within us, and not without us," said Janet. "You remember that book of George's, called 'Without and Within?'"

Daisy did remember. It was the very book she had been reading when she had overheard the conversation between Gertrude and the dressmaker. When she looked back to that afternoon, it seemed at least a year ago since she had been at Portland Place. Yet it was only last month; and here she was, sitting in the large old drawing-room of Hurst Hall, and talking to Mr Alderstone's sister.

It was not difficult for Janet to follow her thoughts. Mr Alderstone had learnt more of Daisy's life than her lips had even dared to tell him; and he had no secrets from his sister Janet.

As Miss Alderstone watched the changes on that fair young face, she felt a presentiment that Daisy would be drawn very near to her by-and-bye. The guide and companion of

Daisy's childhood was not destined, she fancied, to stay long at Hurst Hall.

Presently the tête-a-tête was broken up. Cecily, feeling perhaps that she had allowed the other visitor to engross her too much, came to Janet's side. The conversation became more general, and after a little while Janet took her departure.

As she walked homeward in the winter twilight, her mind was full of Daisy. She pictured the little figure moving all alone through the chambers of the great hall, and ministering to the wants of the old man. And as the lighted windows of the old farmhouse came in sight, she vowed within herself that Daisy should never lack a sister's love while she, Janet Alderstone, lived at Hollyoak Farm.





## CHAPTER XIX.

“ MEET WELCOME TO HER GUEST SHE MADE.”

ALTERATIONS were going on at the Thicket; masons and carpenters were at work, and it was evident that Lord Hazlewood intended to spend a good deal of time in Woodshire.

Before February had come to an end, he had become a frequent visitor at the Hall, and was looked upon as an intimate friend by its master. Mr Hurstone and Cecily were consulted about all the improvements at the Thicket; new rooms were planned; and schemes for extending and beautifying the grounds were talked over with Cecily until Daisy wondered that her aunt was not tired of the whole matter.

But Cecily showed no signs of weariness, and there were certain tokens that told of much inward content. The gravity that had

shaded her face when she had first come to the Hall had quite passed away. She was looking decidedly younger, and her beauty had gained a new glow and freshness that attracted all eyes.

Daisy often followed her with a wistful glance of which Cecily herself was wholly unconscious. And Daisy found sometimes that her aunt gave answers which betokened a preoccupied mind, and fancied that Cecily's old deep interest in her Daisy's concerns was gone.

As Lord Hazlewood came oftener, and Cecily became more and more engrossed, Daisy unconsciously drew nearer and nearer to Janet Alderstone.

The two girls had many a pleasant ramble in those early spring days. A faint tinge of green began to steal over the fine net-work of branches in the woods, and the barren strawberry-plant spread its delicate little blossoms over mossy banks. Yellow butterflies flitted in the sunshine; and birds chirped and twittered in the merry pairing-time. The earth

was full of promises of sweeter things to come ; but Daisy seemed to look at nature with saddened eyes. In her voice there was often a tone of disappointment, and her smile faded more readily than it came.

There was no fear now of encountering Martha Weever in her walks. The poor creature had been removed from her cottage, and put under kind restraint. Great hopes were entertained of her ultimate recovery ; and the little Weevers, cared for and tended by a widow who had no children of her own, were leading a happier life than they had ever known before. All that Charles Hurstone could do to atone for his brother's harshness had been done. Throughout Hurst-Gate and the adjoining parishes it was already well known that the master of the Hall was leading a life of charity and goodwill towards men.

There had been a talk of engaging a resident governess for Daisy, but she seemed to shrink from the idea. And here Janet Alderstone came to her assistance, by re-

commending the curate's widowed sister ;—a lady who had just returned from Paris, and was looking around for employment. So it was arranged that Madame Latour should come to the Hall every morning to superintend Daisy's studies, and the plan answered very well.

Madame Latour was a quiet little woman of five or six-and-thirty, and an utter contrast to Miss Daughton. Madame's extreme modesty often led her to hide her light under a bushel, and of society airs and graces she had none. But she was an accomplished linguist, and a thorough musician, and it was soon evident that Daisy would make steady progress under her care.

One afternoon, when February was far advanced, Janet Alderstone stood at the window of the sitting-room and watched for Daisy.

There were many rooms in Hollyoak farmhouse, and Janet's sanctum opened into the apartment where her father and mother usually sat. The Alderstones had homely



ways, and lived a retired life, but Daisy was already beginning to think that there was no place like Hollyoak Farm for comfort and rest. There were no preserves so sweet as those that Mrs Alderstone produced from her stores; no tea-cakes and gingerbread-biscuits so good as those which Janet's hands had made. All old-fashioned countrified dainties were to be found in that house; and, better still, its tenants still clung to many unfashionable precepts. At the Farm it would have been considered ill-mannered to backbite one's neighbours, no matter how wittily and prettily the backbiting was done.

"Let none of you suffer as a busy body in other men's matters," was an injunction that was often on Mrs Alderstone's lips; and children and servants had taken it to heart. When Mr Alderstone went out to do his business in the world, he was too sensible to seek to pry into the affairs of his acquaintances; and was spoken of as a man who minded his own concerns and kept a still tongue. But he was also known as one who

would go out of his path to help a brother in need ; and it is a noteworthy fact that the quiet persons are generally good Samaritans. Great talkers, like the Priest and the Levite, are often prone "to pass by on the other side."

Both Mr Alderstone and his wife were well stricken in years, and life was to them a peaceful waiting on the brink of the River. They craved for no excitement, and needed nothing that was not supplied to them. Reverses of fortune they had known, and out-lived ; but their children were safely provided for, and their hearts were at rest. George Alderstone, the popular writer, had made his name loved and honoured in the world, and had earned something more substantial than fame. And by the death of her godmother, Janet had inherited a modest property, sufficient to keep her beyond the reach of want.

While Janet was standing at her window, Mrs Alderstone entered the room, and came to her daughter's side.

"You are looking out for Daisy," she said, "The child does not wear so bright a face as I should like to see. Surely she is too young, Janet, to be burdened with secret sorrows."

"She is fretting about Miss Woodburn," Janet answered. "She has never told me so, mother, but I know she grieves at finding herself displaced. Ever since her childhood she has occupied the chief place in Miss Woodburn's life, and now she finds another seated on her throne."

"Ah, Janet, that 'giving place' is always a sore trial," said Mrs Alderstone. "I can remember how I suffered, in my girlhood, when my brother Harry found a dearer companion than his sister! It was very absurd, I know; but I had been his own familiar friend so long! And I did feel inclined at first to look upon his Bessie as an usurper."

"But you conquered the feeling, mother."

"Yes, Janet; but it left me with a sympathy for other girls in a like case. I don't say that they ought to be petted and

encouraged in their jealousy ; for it is a form of jealousy. But I always feel compassion even for an old baby when a new one comes to put its nose out of joint ! ”

“ Dear mother, I believe you have compassion for ‘ the meanest thing that feels ! ’ ” said Janet, kissing the good old lady’s cheek. “ I think I should have been a hard, stern woman, if I hadn’t had such a mother. Do you know, I was just a little disposed to lose patience with Daisy Garnett ? ”

“ I thought so, my dear, ” responded Mrs Alderstone quietly.

“ Yes, you see Daisy herself told me about the death of Miss Woodburn’s first lover, and described the patient self-sacrificing life, that her Aunt Cecily had led. And really when one sees how wonderfully handsome Miss Woodburn is, and how much better than handsome, one feels no surprise at the present state of things. Daisy ought to rejoice that the Earl is, in every way, worthy of such a woman. ”

“ You are quite right, Janet dear ; she

ought to rejoice. Only these poor selfish human hearts of ours so often interfere with the 'oughts.' And we must try to be patient with each other's weaknesses."

Just at that moment Daisy's little figure appeared in sight, and the Alderstones agreed in thinking that it was very pleasant to look upon. The sunlight was bringing out all the rich gloss of her costly fur, and touching her bright brown hair with gold; but her eyes were downcast, and her cheeks as pale as one of the "fair maids of February."

"Poor child," said Janet, and went to meet her at the door.

Mrs Alderstone discreetly left the girls to themselves, and Janet drew Daisy into her cosy sitting-room.

It was a sharp day out of doors, a keen north-easter was blowing; and in spite of all that the sunshine could do, it was a shivering world. Janet's fire looked cheerful; the wainscoted walls of her low-ceiled room reflected the bright blaze, and her easy-chair held out its arms invitingly to Daisy.

"Take off your furs, and let us have a chat," coaxed Janet, putting on a little motherly air. "You are looking quite chilled, Daisy."

"I am chilled," Daisy responded sadly. "It is a bright, hard, cold day,—a day that seems fair, and is really pitiless. The wind cuts like a knife."

Janet put a footstool for her friend, removed her fur cap with her own hands, and then took an opposite seat. Daisy looked up, and gathered comfort from the trustworthy face and honest eyes.

"O Janet," she said, suddenly, "Aunt Cecily is going to be married. She came into my room last night, and told me, and I *can't* be glad!"

"Not glad for her sake, Daisy?"

"Not yet; but—I'm trying," Daisy answered, struggling with a sob.

"And the gladness will come by-and-by," Janet said cheerily.

"Yes, I believe it will. But oh, Janet, life at Hurst Hall will be very unlike the life that

I had pictured ! I never thought of myself as the lonely little mistress of that big house."

"Dear Daisy, it is just that habit of 'picturing' that makes life so hard for imaginative people. They quarrel with realities because they are not exactly like their dreams."

"I know," sighed Daisy, "I can't be so grateful as I ought to be for Uncle Charles's love, and my beautiful home. I never dreamt of that home without Cecily as the central figure in it."

"But, don't you see, dear Daisy, how wonderfully Cecily and the Earl seem to be fitted for each other ? The one lost the betrothed of her girlhood, and the other the wife of his youth. And don't you know that the buried loves will often draw the living hearts together ? Ah, when you are as old as I am, you will understand it all !"

This was the way in which Twenty talked to Sixteen, and Sixteen listened with meekness.

Before the old clock in the hall had struck

five, Daisy was feeling soothed and comforted ; and then there was a pleasant clatter of cups and saucers in the next room, and Janet opened the door of her sanctum.

The long, low room was glowing with ruddy firelight, and the peaceful old couple in their easy chairs had just awakened from a brief afternoon doze. On the table was the old-fashioned tea service of blue china, with the antique silver teapot and cream-jug, that had descended to Mrs Alderstone from her grandmother. There was brown bread and white ; there were the crisp tea-cakes that Daisy always relished, and delicate fawn-coloured eggs that the Cochins had laid. And in the middle of the white cloth stood the rustic-looking pot that contained a flourishing fern, green and fresh in its setting of moss, as if it had only just been gathered in the Hurstone woods.

Daisy took her place at that hospitable board, and the old folks petted her in their quiet fashion. Does any one ever truly realise the strong influence of a real home ?



Home influence was just the very thing that Daisy needed that day, and she found it at the old farm.

There are people who have a power of creating a home wherever they go. Here and there you find a woman who can transform a lodging-house sitting-room into a haven of rest for a troubled soul. She does not even alter the arrangement of the furniture, perhaps; but she puts a book here, and a work-basket there, and rings for the tea-tray; and in five minutes she has created an atmosphere of comfort around her. Any tired man, coming in from the turmoil of the outer world, would say to himself, "Here is a veritable home."

The talk, and the tea, and the petting did Daisy a world of good. At half-past six she was escorted home by Janet, and Esther the housemaid. Well was it for her that Holly-oak Farm was scarcely a stone's throw from Hurst Hall.

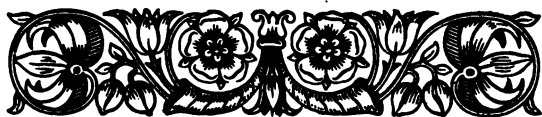
At seven she had to sit down to dinner in the great dining-room with her uncle, and

Aunt Cecily and Lord Hazlewood. Cecily gave her many an anxious glance, and was unspeakably relieved to see a brighter look on her face.

"After all," thought Daisy, as she went to bed that night, "I ought to think more of Aunt Cecily's happiness than mine; and I have no right to insist that she shall only be happy in my way."

It is hard sometimes for us all to remember that human beings are not railway engines, and will not travel obediently on the iron lines that we have laid down for them.





## CHAPTER XX.

“ALL IN THE BLUE UNCLOUDED WEATHER.”

THE birds in the Hurstone woods in general had a quiet time of it, and performed their trills and shakes unheard and undisturbed. It was very seldom that any melody, save theirs, was heard in those sequestered shades ; but there came a certain bright day in March, when the clang of church-bells drowned every other sound.

Clash, clash, clash ; it was a strange, sweet clamour that had a faint tone of sadness in it, as all bell-music has. The sun shone gloriously ; golden arrows shot down through latticed boughs, and spent themselves on the mossy floor, where anemones trembled at the lightest breath. On such a day one might have fancied the fairies venturing out of their winter nooks to sport among the spring

blossoms. But it was no fairy who came gliding along the wood-paths in pale blue silk and lace. It was only a mortal maiden, weeping human tears, and decked with greenhouse flowers that could not put the anemones to shame.

Poor, disconsolate Daisy had flown to the woods in her grief. No sooner had the bride spoken her farewells and set her foot in the carriage, than the bells clashed out, and Daisy fled from the Hall.

She did not stop to take off her bridal finery, nor even to fling an old slipper after the carriage. It was Lady Jessie Boyd who flung the shoe, and the little lord a handful of rice. The guests were not numerous; it had been a very quiet wedding; and when the hall-door was closed, and the sound of wheels was dying away, Uncle Charles looked round in vain for Daisy.

But she was not long left to make her little moan to the birds and wood-anemones. Janet Alderstone's instincts had told her where Daisy might be looked for, and Mr Alderstone went in search of her himself.

"Daisy," he said, taking her by the hand, "the dryads may be very good company, but they shall not engross you to-day. I have a thousand things to say to you."

"And I am utterly stupid; I have nothing to say to you, Mr Alderstone," sobbed Daisy.

"That does not matter in the least. I will undertake all the talking, and you shall do the listening. Come indoors, Daisy."

"I will come presently," she said.

"No; it must be now. For your uncle's sake," he added.

Very reluctantly Daisy suffered herself to be led back to the house; and having slipped away to her room to wash off the traces of tears, she reappeared among the guests.

Mr Alderstone brought news of Rhoda and Maud. Both had been overwhelmed with astonishment, he said, at the news of Miss Woodburn's marriage; and even Dr Garnett had been shaken out of his self-possession for once. And as Daisy recalled all the contempt that the Garnetts had poured upon her mother's family, she could

not repress a little smile of triumph. The smile chased away her tears, and she, in her turn, found something to tell.

First there was the little history of the Leeson's to be related. They had been supplied with means enough to leave London, and return to their old home in the country town. A grateful letter had been received from the young dressmaker, telling of the renewed health and strength that the change had brought, and of the welcome given by old friends to her mother and herself.

Janet Alderstone stayed with her friend at the Hall that night. It was a trial to Daisy to take her aunt's place at the breakfast-table next morning, and a still greater trial to receive Mrs Lunn, the housekeeper, when that stately dame came to her for orders. But she got through it all very well; and one by one her little hands gathered up the duties that Cecily had laid down, and wove them into the tissue of her daily life.

It was May before the aunt and niece met again, and their meeting took place in the

Earl's town house in Mayfair. Daisy spent a month in London, and then returned to Hurst Hall, full of joy at the thought that Cecily would come to the Thicket in July.

Summer in Woodshire was full of delights, and Janet Alderstone and her brother were Daisy's constant companions. There were long rides through the woods, and out upon the moors that lay beyond Hurst-Gate, and extended to the hills. Daisy soon learnt to feel at home in the saddle ; and exercise and fresh air brought a delicate bloom into her cheeks. She was gayer and more girlish in these days than she had ever been before in her life.

The three were riding slowly homeward across the moors one afternoon, and Daisy's glance wandered lovingly over the landscape around her. The hills were clouded here and there with a soft purple mist, and the waste land was flushed with all the rich colours of ripe summer. About half a mile from the winding road lay a large sheet of water, glittering, silver-bright, in the sun,



"THE THREE WERE RIDING SLOWLY HOMEWARD."—Page 280.





and bordered by the deep gold of gorses, and the warm green of velvety rushes. It seemed to Daisy that the intense stillness of the little lake served to deepen the loneliness of the place. Not a single habitation was in sight; one or two shaggy ponies were grazing far away on the moor; but no human being could be seen.

"There's the old Moor Pond," said Mr Alderstone following the direction of Daisy's eyes. "Many a good day's skating have I had there in my boyhood."

"It is a long time since the pond has been skated over," remarked Janet. "We have not had a really hard winter for some years."

"Harriet Bellister used to be wild about skating," Mr Alderstone said smiling. "She got on famously in Canada, it seems, and braved the cold like the tough little creature she is. She gave me quite an eloquent account of her travels when I saw her in town."

"And wanted you to make her the heroine of a novel?" laughed Janet.

"She and Miss Sandon are inseparable," George continued. "Did you come across them, Daisy, when you were with Lady Hazlewood?"

"No," Daisy answered. "I looked about for Gertrude, but I never caught sight of her anywhere. And Maud told me that she had not met Gerty since last Christmas."

"Miss Sandon is going the pace that kills," said George Alderstone, gravely. "My cousin Harriet is as strong as one of those Shetland ponies yonder; but her friend was never meant for a hard worldly life. I never saw any girl more plainly unfit for physical wear and tear, and yet she gives herself no rest."

"If she only knew what peace was!" sighed Daisy. "She will not give herself time to learn what it is. There is no leisure at all in that feverish little life of hers."

"Harriet Bellister will not let any one have leisure if she can help it," said Janet. "She does not like to see people sitting still; they must be always in action if they are to find

favour in her sight! She laughs at nerves, and simply refuses to believe in headache or weariness."

"She must be a dreadful woman to live with," observed Daisy.

"Dreadful in our eyes. But Miss Sandon appears to get on with her very well. Really, Daisy, I think the fair Gertrude has been acting a part, just to excite your sympathies. She is the lightest, gayest atom of frivolity that I have ever yet seen. If a grave thought does by chance enter her brain she drives it out again in an instant."

"I do not believe she is so light as she seems," said Daisy, decidedly. "She has told me a little bit of her history."

"She has no history at all," cried Janet, laughing.

"Everybody has a history," Daisy replied. "Even the little Ephemera told the story of their day to the old oak, in Andersen's fairy tale. You serious people are often possessed with the idea that no one has any inner life save yourselves."

“Every heart knoweth its own bitterness,” said George Alderstone. “And even the brightest, homeliest landscape generally has its touch of gloom and mystery. Look at the quiet, deep old Moor Pond,—no one has ever sounded it yet.”

Afterwards, when unforeseen events had given new associations to the scene, Daisy thought of that day’s talk. But no more was said about grave subjects as they rode homewards. Mr Alderstone began to speak of the quaint old fairy legends that yet lingered in Woodshire, and they were still busy in discussing the origin of some of those tales when the cottages of Hurst-Gate came in sight. In the fields around the village the wheat was fast ripening in the warm air; orchard boughs were laden with fruit; juicy cherries were piled up in baskets, ready for the market; and labouring men and women saluted them with smiling faces. Two sturdy boys and a pretty little dark-eyed girl made bows and curtseys from one cottage-gate, and Daisy’s eyes brightened at the sight of them.

"There are the little Weevers," she said ;  
"how rosy and happy they look ! Uncle  
Charles thinks that their mother will come  
back to them by-and-by !"

The friends parted at the gates of the  
Hall, promising to meet again before the day  
was done. And indoors there was a letter  
that set Daisy's heart in a flutter of delight.

Lord and Lady Hazlewood might be ex-  
pected at the Thicket on the evening of the  
next day ; the letter was written quite in  
Cecily's old strain, and was full of anxious  
inquiries about her Daisy's welfare. Cecily,  
the Countess, kept her old love warm in  
her heart, and would never let it go, no  
matter what changes the coming years might  
bring.





## CHAPTER XXI.

“THOU HAST FINISH’D JOY AND MOAN.”

SUMMER and autumn had passed away, and winter had fairly set in before Mrs Bellister and her friend arrived at Clover Mead.

Daisy had her first glimpse of the pair in church. They came in rather late, and a good many heads were turned at their entrance. Mrs Bellister, a plump little woman with a round, rosy face, was very richly dressed ; but her colours were too gay for Daisy’s sober taste, and she looked almost vulgar beside her young companion. More fragile than ever, Gertrude seemed to have gained in style and elegance. Daisy could not help glancing at her when they stood up to sing, and encountered the eager gaze of those great, bright eyes. An indescribable feeling of pity and tenderness filled her

heart ; and yet the dainty little lady, delicate though she was, did not seem to stand in need of compassion at all.

In the porch after service, Daisy was met with outstretched hands and cordial greetings.

"I am more than glad to see you," said Gertrude's silvery voice. "How happy you must be now, Daisy !"

"Yes ; I am happy," Daisy replied. "Have you come to make a long stay at Clover Mead ?"

"As long as Mrs Bellister wants me I shall remain. The air here is a wonderful tonic, they say ; and I think I need strengthening. Between ourselves, Daisy, I am a sad wreck."

"Ought you not to live a quiet life ?"

"Quietness is impossible with Mrs Bellister. We have a crowd of people coming at Christmas, and we are arranging for balls and theatricals. By the way, how did the Garnetts' charade-party go off last year ?"

"Very well, I believe ; I don't remember



it distinctly, so many things happened just then."

"I had a furious letter from Maud," said Gertrude, lowering her voice as they walked towards the churchyard gates; "and I must own I used her rather badly. I wrote and said I was sorry she was pained; it was all that could be done."

"She was deeply hurt," answered Daisy. "I saw her distress, and it was real."

"The whole affair was most unfortunate," Gertrude confessed. "I daresay I have made her my enemy for life; but it can't be helped. Is that beautiful woman the Countess of Hazlewood?"

"Yes," said Daisy, smiling at Cecily.

"And she is your aunt; and everybody raves about her. Oh, Daisy, what a fortunate girl you are! I believe the fates are kind to good, quiet, little souls like you."

They parted at the gate; Gertrude tripping off to Mrs Bellister's brougham, and Daisy walking homewards by her uncle's side.

There had been real friendliness in Miss Sandon's manner, and Daisy could not help hoping that she had caught a glimpse of Gertrude's better self. She called at Clover Mead with Mr Hurstone, on Tuesday, but Mrs Bellister and Miss Sandon were not at home.

Before the week was ended, however, the ladies from Clover Mead returned the visit, and the two girls found an opportunity to say a few confidential words.

"You really are looking delicate, Gertrude," said Daisy, with a ring of true sympathy in her voice. Gertrude met her gaze with a grateful look and a sigh.

"I often feel very weary, Daisy," she replied. "But," she added, almost in a whisper, "I cannot get away from Mrs Bellister at present."

At the other end of the room Mrs Bellister was talking volubly to Mr Hurstone, standing at the open door of the conservatory, and holding forth upon the different shades of the camellias. There was no fear that Gertrude's low tone would be overheard.

"I am her paid companion," she went on bitterly. "Of course no one knows that I receive any salary ; it is understood that I am to be treated as a guest. But I am a servant, Daisy ; just an upper servant, and that's all !"

"But, Gertrude, there are kind, good people whom it would be pleasant to live with. Or there is your uncle's house."

"They do not want me at home," Miss Sandon answered decidedly. "The general says that I have acquired expensive habits ; and my mother, being a confirmed invalid, finds her own income barely sufficient for her wants. She has a nurse always with her, and a daughter is of no use at all."

"Oh, Gertrude, is not that the daughter's fault ?"

"Yes, Daisy ; perhaps it is. I always hated being with sick people ; but any way a nurse is necessary now, for mamma is nearly helpless."

"But, Gertrude, if you are uncomfortable at Clover Mead you need not stay there. Does Mrs Bellister expect too much of you ?"

"She is a wonderfully robust person, and she won't let anybody take rest," sighed Gertrude. "Nerves and headaches and ailments she doesn't understand. We are like the troubled sea, always in motion. I should have liked it once, I daresay; but one can have too much even of pleasure."

"Especially if one is not strong."

"Ah, yes. I wish I could have just one quiet hour with you, Daisy. There are many things that I want to say."

The quiet hour was secured a day or two later by Janet Alderstone's influence. She went to Clover Mead and kept Mrs Bellister amused, while Daisy and Gertrude took afternoon tea together at the Hall.

It was what country-folk call an old-fashioned winter. Every day the weather grew colder and colder, and the crystal sheet on the village pools became thicker and thicker. The roads were as hard as iron, and in the wheel-ruts the thin ice cracked under one's tread. But, if the season was severe, the people of Hurst-Gate were well cared for,

and many a basin of soup and bottle of port found their way to the homes of the sick.

Daisy had led her friend to the little breakfast-room, and there they were as warm as hot tea and a blazing fire could make them. At six Gertrude was to be sent home in a carriage to Clover Mead ; for Mrs Bellister dined at seven, and could not spare her companion.

" Daisy," said Miss Sandon, breaking a silence that had fallen on them both, " do you know that I have a daily increasing desire for rest ? I almost think I could spend the rest of my days in a cottage, tending old people ;—I should be glad of anything that would give me time for stillness and repose."

" But, Gerty, what a different life you would lead !"

" I want my life to be different. I want to think, and be quiet. Yon have never known what it is to be so terribly tired as I am. I often compare myself with a poor circus-girl, racing round the ring night after night in her gaudy dress. Her life is just like mine."

Long after her uncle's brougham had taken Gertrude back to Mrs Bellister, Daisy sat and mused by the fire, planning how she could best help this friend of hers. She thought that she would ask Mr Hurstone to let Gertrude pay them a long visit; and when she was thoroughly rested and strengthened, perhaps Lady Hazlewood's influence might find her a happier home than Clover Mead. Her meditations were cut short by Uncle Charles himself.

"There is to be skating on the Moor Pond to-morrow," he said. "Would you like to see the skaters, Daisy? It will be a fine day, I think."

"Yes, I should like it very much," Daisy answered, still thinking more of Gertrude than the skaters. And then orders were given for the carriage to be ready at eleven the next morning.

The day dawned clear and bright, and Daisy looked out upon a sparkling world from her chamber window. Uncle Charles was in excellent spirits; skating had been a

favourite amusement of his early boyhood, and he was full of stories of old times and old doings. The open carriage, heaped with buffalo and bear skins, came round to the hall-door at the appointed hour, and Daisy's spirits rose as the horses trotted briskly along the road.

The moors were no longer silent and deserted ; from all parts people were flocking towards the great pond, on which the skaters had already begun their evolutions. Carriages were to be seen, too ; the Earl and Countess of Hazlewood were looking on, and Janet Alderstone was standing by her father's side, watching the gliding figures with an amused face. Daisy soon made her way to her friend's side.

"Look at Mrs Bellister," said Janet, laughing. "She prides herself on her skating, but she is too short and stout to show to advantage on the ice. What a gorgeous hat that is ; I wonder why she will always deck herself out in such a gaudy fashion !"

"She looks like a tropical bird," said Daisy. "What a contrast to Gertrude !"

"Yes, I am beginning to own that there is a charm about Miss Sandon. You know I was prejudiced; but she is not nearly so frivolous as I expected to find her, and she bewitches one with her bright eyes and silvery voice. Look at her now;—what a graceful little winter-fay she is!"

The light figure of Gertrude in a tightly-fitting costume, all silver-grey cloth and chinchilla, went skimming along like a sprite. Daisy was not near enough to see her face, but there was not the least token of weariness in that easy movement, and she followed Gerty with a fascinated gaze.

"Who is that in light-grey?" asked Lord Hazlewood, joining the two girls. "Cecily has been admiring her a good deal."

"It is Miss Sandon; she is a friend of mine," Daisy answered. "I never saw any one skate so beautifully."

At that moment one of the Earl's servants stepped up to the little group, and spoke to his master.

"Are you girls thinking of venturing on the



pond?" Lord Hazlewood asked. "You must be careful to keep on this side if you do. Carter has just told me that the ice yonder was broken up for the water-fowl yesterday, and of course it is only covered again by a very thin crust. He is gone to warn people off the spot."

The Earl's closing words were drowned by a loud shout. There was instantly a rush of the crowd towards the other side of the pond, and Daisy and her companions were borne along by the throng.

"What is it?" cried Daisy, grasping the Earl's arm.

"Some one has gone in, I am afraid," he answered. "But Carter and some of my people are on the watch. They will ;—good heaven!"

"What?" cried Daisy, agonised. But Lord Hazlewood gently freed himself from her hands, and pushed his way to the edge of the lake. Recognising him, the spectators parted to left and right; and then the girls caught a glimpse of a large pool in the

ice, and floating on it a little grey cap trimmed with fur.

Daisy had afterwards but an indistinct recollection of what followed. She remembered vaguely the cries and lamentations of the crowd, and then the vision of a young white face, calm in its last sleep. Poor Gertrude; rest was given to her indeed, a rest for body and soul too. The feverish little life, with all its perplexities and troubles, had come to a sudden end.

After what seemed a long dream, Daisy woke to the consciousness of being lifted out of the carriage, and borne upstairs to her own room. Kind hands were busy about her; Cecily unfastened her furs and outer garments, and helped to smooth her pillow. And throughout the remainder of that weary day, Cecily kept watch by her side.

Mrs Bellister indulged in a violent burst of tears and hysterics, and would have been glad to forget that her selfishness had forced her companion to go to the Moor Pond. Gertrude had pleaded headache and weariness.

ness as an excuse for staying at home ; but her complaints were met with a sneer, and she had braced herself up to do her part. Well, it was all over now. No need to play the world's game any longer ; no need to wear a mask and live a false life ; Gertrude had done with shams and deceits for ever and ever.

Janet and Daisy went together to the pretty village churchyard to choose her resting-place. They found a quiet nook near the east wall of the old church, where a yew was casting its morning shadow over the frosty grass. All around the landscape, in its winter garb, was bright with December sunshine ; the sky had the intense clearness and purity that is oftenest seen in early spring ; and a robin, perched upon a leafless elm, was trilling his cheery song.

Daisy's thoughts went back to the day when she had first seen Gertrude Sandon at Portland Place, and had little dreamt that in the space of one brief year she should be choosing the spot for her grave. She re-

membered, too, the last talk they had ever had together; and Gerty's intense longing for a new and calmer life.

"Maud will not see the grave till the flowers are growing over it," she said to Janet. "She will come here when the May blossoms are in bloom, and the trees have put on their leaves again. And, perhaps, Janet, she may feel, as she stands here, that death is only love's winter, not its destruction."

\* \* \* \* \*

We shall not follow Daisy Garnett any farther along the path of her life, but leave her, dwelling in the old Hall, living among her best earthly friends, loving and beloved. Happier days are in store for her than she has ever yet known; days when the girl's feelings shall change and deepen into the feelings of a woman, and childish things shall be put away without a sigh. Sorrows, too, will come; other graves, besides Gertrude's, will be wept over with bitter tears; but Heavenly sunlight will be shining on her still.

Mr Alderstone has watched the developing of her character with earnest eyes. Daisy's heart was won unawares in those sad days in Portland Place, when George Alderstone first came into her young life. In those days she had thought of him as a light-bearer, sent to brighten the gloom of her dark path ; but she did not dream that he was destined to tread that path by her side. As husband and wife the pair will travel peacefully through rough ways and smooth, united by that bond of perfect sympathy, which does not always exist, even when hearts are very closely joined together.

\* \* \* \* \*

There are not many changes in the busy town of Bridleton as the years move on ; it is, and always will be, one of those bustling, smoke-bedimmed places where poverty and suffering are ever to be found. But a stranger, wandering through the town, may chance perhaps to come upon a certain street in which our little heroine first saw the light. The house in which Daisy was born still

remains, but it has been so enlarged and improved as to be scarcely recognisable ; and the visitor will be told, with some pride, that this is the Children's Hospital, founded in memory of Doctor Andrew Garnett by his daughter.

The room where Rose Garnett sat working at her baby garments, and Daisy played her solitary childish games, is a pleasant chamber in these days. Little sick children do not grow tired of the sunny pictures and bright texts upon its walls ; and kind nurses move to and fro, bringing fruits and flowers to the small beds, or sit beside them to read the newest story-books. The yard is now converted into a veritable garden, much larger than it ever was in old times, and flowers and green things have been coaxed to grow in spite of soot and smoke. The Michaelmas daisies still bloom in their season, and make friends with china asters and dahlias.

It is no new tale that the flowers have to tell each other as they stand grouped to-

gether in the autumn sunshine ; it is only the old story that will never have an end while the earth endures.

And yet what a beautiful tale it is ;—the tale of patience, and long-suffering, and steadfastness ! In all the world, perhaps, there is hardly any nobler thing than the fortitude which is lovely amid unloveliness, and fresh in the midst of decay.

This is the story that the Michaelmas daisies are ever whispering in the misty town-garden ; and the nurses repeat it to the sick children lying within doors. And the lesson of the Michaelmas daisies becomes wrought into the daily life of many a suffering little one, just as it must be wrought into your life and mine if we are to live worthily and truly. For to each of us is given the power of living and growing, no matter in what dreary corner our roots may be planted ; and the Master keeps watch over the blossoms, even when they are opened for his eye alone.

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